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JOHN SCOTT, D. D.

SOMETIME RECTOR OF ST. GILES'S IN THE FIELDS.

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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES

UPON

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DISCOURSE XXIII.

UPON

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

IN the 24th verse, our Saviour urges his disciples to that necessary duty of denying themselves; that is, of surrendering up their wills to the conduct of his, and renouncing all their worldly interest, when it comes in competition with their duty, and of taking up their cross and following him; that is, of preparing themselves to endure persecution for his sake, and to persist courageously in the profession and practice of his religion, whatsoever oppositions they should meet with from the world. And to press them hereunto, he urges this argument, verse 25, *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life shall find it.* Where the Greek word ψυχὴ, which we render *life*, may perhaps be better rendered *himself*, it being familiar both with Hebrews and Syrians, to call a man's life and soul *himself:* so the Psalmist, *Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell*, that is, Thou shalt not leave me perishing in my grave, Psalm xvi. 10: and Levit. xx. 25, *Ye shall not make your souls abominable*, i. e. yourselves; and that it should be so rendered here is evident, because St. Luke so expounds it, *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?*

Luke ix. 25. And indeed the soul, being the principal part of a man, and that which advances him into a species of being above that of a mere animal, may very well be called *himself*, according to that of Hierocles, σὺ γὰρ εἶ ἡ ψυχὴ, τὸ δὲ σῶμα σὸν, τὰ δὲ ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος. "Thy soul is thee, thy body thine, "and thy outward goods thy body's." And if, instead of *life*, we render ψυχὴ *himself*, the words will be very plain and easy; For whosoever will save himself by renouncing me and my religion, shall lose himself for ever; and whosoever will be content to lose himself for my sake, shall save himself for ever. And this he farther enforces in the text, ***What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*** that is, What will it avail a man to gain the whole world, if he for ever ruin himself by it? and when he hath thus ruined himself, what would he give, if it were in his power, to save and recover himself again? The words thus explained, I shall resolve the sense of them into these five propositions:

I. That a man, or the soul of a man, is a thing of inestimable price and value; for our Saviour here weighs it against the whole world, that is, against all the pleasures, profits, and honours that this inferior world can afford; and declares that, in the just balance of his esteem, it outweighs them all. And certainly that must needs be exceeding precious, whose worth the whole world cannot counterpoise.

II. That this precious soul may be lost. This our Saviour plainly supposes in these words, ***if he lose his own soul.***

III. That our renouncing of Christ and his religion will most certainly infer this loss. For these words, as I have shewed you, our Saviour urges as an argument to dissuade men from apostasy; but if without losing our souls we might renounce him, and apostatize from him, there would be no force in all this argument to dissuade us from it.

IV. That when this soul is lost, it is lost irrecoverably. *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Where the Greek word ἀντάλλαγμα, which we render *exchange*, is used in the same sense with ἐξίλασμα, which signifies a price of redemption, denoting that if a man should or could give never so much to buy his soul from perdition, yet no price of redemption will be taken for it.

V. That this irrecoverable loss of a soul is of such a vast moment, that the gain of the whole world is not sufficient to compensate it. *What is a man profited*, that is, he is not at all profited; nay, he is so far from that, that he is a vast loser.

I. That the soul of a man is a thing of an inestimable price and value. And for the proof of this proposition I shall endeavour these two things.

First, To represent to you of what vast worth it is, in respect of its own natural capacities.

Secondly, To shew you of what vast esteem it is, in the judgment of all those, who, as we must needs suppose, do best understand the worth of it.

1. I shall endeavour to represent to you of what vast worth it is, in respect of its own natural capacities; particularly in these four. 1. In respect of its capacity of understanding. 2. Of moral perfection. 3. Of pleasure and delight. 4. Of immortality.

1. The soul of man is of vast worth in respect of its capacity of understanding. For certainly, to understand is the greatest and noblest operation that a being is capable of; for it is this that gives beauty and excellence to all our other operations, whether they be natural or moral: it is this that proposes the ends, and directs the course, and prescribes the measures of all our other actions; and though we had never so much force or power, yet unless we had understanding to guide and manage it, it would be altogether insignificant: for blind power acts at random; and if we had the force of a whirlwind, yet without a mind to steer and manage it, it would be an equal chance whether we did well or ill with it: so that unless there were some understanding, either within or without us, to conduct our active powers, and determine them to our good, we were as good be altogether without them; because while they act by chance, it is at least an equal lay whether they will injure or advantage us. Since therefore understanding is the rule and measure of all our other powers, it necessarily follows, that itself is the greatest and noblest of them all. What an excellent being therefore must a soul be, in which this great and sovereign power resides! a power that can collect into itself such prodigious numbers of simple apprehensions, and, by comparing one with the other, can connect them into true propositions, and upon each of these can run such long and curious descants of discourse, till it hath drawn out all their consequents into a chain of wise and coherent notions, and sorted these into such various systems of useful arts and sciences: that can discern the harmonious contextures of truths with truths, the secret links

and junctures of coherent notions, trace up effects to their causes, and sift the remotest consequents to their natural principles: that can cast abroad its sharpsighted thoughts over the whole extent of beings, and, like the sun with its outstretched rays, reach the remotest objects: that can in the twinkling of an eye expatiate through all the universe, and keep correspondence with both worlds; can prick out the paths of the heavenly bodies, and measure the circles of their motion; span the whole surface of the earth, and dive into its capacious womb, and there discover the numerous offsprings with which it is continually teeming: that can sail into the world of spirits by the never varying compass of its reason, and discover those invisible regions of happiness and misery, which are altogether out of our sight whilst we stand upon this hither shore: in a word, that can ascend from cause to cause, to God, who is the cause of all, and with its eagle-eyes can gaze upon that glorious sun, and dive into the infinite abyss of his divine perfections. What an excellent being therefore is that soul, that is endowed with such a vast capacity of understanding, and with its piercing eye can reach such an immense compass of beings, and travel through so vast an horizon of truth! Doubtless, if human souls had no other capacity to value themselves by, but only this, this were enough to give them preeminence over all inferior beings, and render them the most glorious part of all this sublunary world.

2. The soul of man is of vast worth, in respect of its capacity of moral perfection. For by the exercise of those human virtues which are proper to it, in this state of conjunction with the body, it is

capable of raising itself to the perfection of those angelical natures, which, of all creatures, do most nearly approach and resemble the great Creator and Fountain of all perfection. For by keeping a due restraint upon its bodily appetites, and thereby gradually weaning itself from the pleasures of the body, it may by degrees be educated and trained up to lead the life and relish the joys of naked and immortal spirits; it may be contempered to an incorporeal state, so as to be able to enjoy itself without eating and drinking, and live most happily upon the fare of angels, upon wisdom, and holiness, and love, and contemplation. And then, by governing its own will and affections by the laws of reason and religion, it may by degrees improve itself so far in all these moral endowments, which are the proper graces of every reasonable nature, as to be at last as perfectly wise and reasonable in its own choices and refusals, in its love and hatred, in its desires and delights, as the angels themselves are. For though it cannot be expected that, in this imperfect state, a soul should arrive to such a pitch as this, yet even now it may be growing up and aspiring to it; which, if it doth, as I shall shew you by and by, when this is expired, it hath another life to live; which being antecedently prepared for by those spiritual improvements it hath made here, will furnish it with opportunities of improving infinitely faster than here it did, or possibly could. For in that life it shall not only be freed from those many encumbrances which do here retard it in its spiritual progress; nor shall it only be associated with a world of pure and blessed spirits, whose holy example and wise converse will doubtless wonderfully edify and improve it; but be also admitted

into a more intimate acquaintance with God, who is the author and pattern of all perfection; the sight of whose ravishing beauty will inflame it with a most ardent love to him, and excite it to a most vigorous imitation of him: all which considered, it is not to be imagined how much the state of heaven will immediately improve those happy souls that are prepared and disposed for it. But then, considering that moral perfection is as infinite as the nature of God, in which there is an infinity of holiness, and justice, and goodness, within this boundless subject there will be room enough for souls to make farther and farther improvements in, even to eternity. And then, when they shall still be growing on so fast, and yet be still for ever improving, to what a transcendent height of glory and perfection will they at last arrive! for though no finite soul can ever arrive to an infinite perfection, yet still it may be growing on to it, because there will still be possible degrees of it beyond its present attainments; and when it is arrived to the farthest imaginable degree, yet still it will be capable of farther, and so farther and farther, to all eternity. And if so, O blessed God! of what a capacious nature hast thou made these souls of ours, which, though they will doubtless improve in goodness as fast in the other life as is possible for them, with all the advantages of a heavenly state, yet will never attain to an utmost period, but still be growing perfecter and perfecter for ever!

3. The soul of man is of vast worth, in respect of its immense capacities of pleasure and delight. For its capacity of pleasure must necessarily be as large and extensive as its capacity of understanding and of moral perfection; because the proper pleasure of a

soul results from its own knowledge and goodness, from its farther discoveries of truth, and farther proficiency in inward rectitude and virtue; and, consequently, as it improves farther and farther in understanding and in moral perfection, it must still gather more and more fuel to feed and increase its own joy and pleasure. For the pleasure of every being consists in the vigorous exercise of its faculties about convenient and agreeable objects; but the faculties of a soul are understanding and will, to which the only agreeable objects are truth and goodness; and therefore the more truth there is in the mind, and the more goodness there is in the will, the more vigorously will they employ and exercise themselves about them, and consequently the more they will be pleased and ravished. Since therefore every new discovery of truth, and every new degree of goodness, gives new life to our minds and wills, and renders both more sprightly and vigorous, it hence necessarily follows, that our souls are capable of as much pleasure as they are of truth and goodness; and how vastly capable they are of both these, I have already shewed you. So that it is not to be imagined by us, who have here so little experience, what heavens of joy a soul is capable of; only at present we find by experience, that the more we improve in knowledge and goodness, the more pleasant and cheerful we find and feel ourselves; and that our faculties still grow more active and lightsome, the more we disburden them of that ignorance and sin that clogs and encumbers them: and upon great proficiencies in knowledge and virtue, we find a strange alacrity within ourselves; we are, as it were, in heaven upon earth, and do feel a paradise springing up within us,

the fragrance of whose joys grows many times so strong, that our frail mortality can hardly bear them. When therefore such souls do cast off this mortality, which now doth only fetter and entangle them, and have made their entrance into the invisible regions of blessedness, how sprightly and active, how lightsome and cheerful will they feel themselves! For in the first moment of their admission, all that mist of erroneous prejudice which now interrupts their prospect of truth, and all those remains of irregular affection that check and distract them in their choice of goodness, will be for ever chased from their minds and wills by the clear light of the heavenly state; and their faculties having disburdened themselves, and shaken off every clog, with what unspeakable vigour will they move and act, especially in the presence of such suitable objects as the heavenly state will present before them! When infinite truth and infinite goodness shall be always present to their free minds and undistracted wills, and nothing shall interpose to hinder them, either in seeing the one or in choosing the other, here will be work enough for both to all eternity: and both being freed from all encumbrance, the one will be discovering every moment farther and farther into that infinite truth which it loves and admires, and the other will be improving every moment more and more in that infinite goodness which it chooses and adores. And then every new discovery and new improvement will spring new heavens of joy in the soul; and by reason of those new acquests of truth and goodness, which we shall every moment make, we shall every moment be entertained with new pleasures, and so before we have spent one joy, an-

other will succeed, and another that, and so on for ever. For when a God of infinite truth and goodness becomes the objective happiness of a finite nature, which cannot comprehend and enjoy him but in an infinite succession; every new delight the enjoyment of him creates in us must necessarily raise a new desire, and every new desire immediately find a new delight, and so round again to all eternity. Of what a vast capacity therefore is this soul of ours, in which there is room enough successively to entertain all the ravishing joys and pleasures that make an everlasting heaven! that can drink in those deep rivers of pleasure, as fast as they spring up, and flow from God's right hand for evermore! What tongue can express the innumerable joys that such a soul can hold, whose capacity is so large as heaven, and so near to infinite, as to be able to contain all those joys and pleasures that infinite truth and goodness can create?

4. And lastly, The soul of man is of vast worth, in respect of its capacity of immortality. For by its operations it is evident that the soul is not composed of corruptible matter, but is a spiritual and immaterial substance; for if it were matter, it would act and move only when other matter presses upon it, and not be able to determine the course of its own motion, but would be forced to move backwards or forwards, according as it was thrust on by that outward matter that continually moves and presses upon it; and all its motions would be as necessary as that of a stone in the air, when it is thrust up by an impressed force, and pressed down again by the weight of the air above it: whereas in this soul of ours we sensibly feel and experience a natural li-

berty of acting, a power to move itself, and to determine its own motions which way it pleaseth; when it is pressed forward never so vigorously by the strong impulses of outward objects, it is in its power to go on or retreat, and to divert the current of its thoughts into a quite contrary channel to that whereinto it is thrust and directed by all the impressions of its sense. For thus in the midst of the alarms and shoutings of an army, of the noises of drums and trumpets ringing in our ears, our soul can recollect itself, and reduce its scattered thoughts into profound contemplations of a sweet and blessed peace; and when it is pressed from without, with never so much importunity to this or that particular choice, it is in its power to reject the motion, and to choose the quite contrary. By all which it is apparent, that the soul hath an innate liberty of acting; that she is not necessitated from without by the different concourses and motions of the several particles of matter; but that all the diversity of her wills and opinions is principally owing to her own freedom and power of self-determination: and to make the least doubt of it, is to question the common sense and experience of mankind. Since therefore the soul is not determined in its motions by the different pressures of material things, as all other matter is, but hath power to swim against the torrent, and move quite counter to all foreign impressions, it hence necessarily follows that it is immaterial. And indeed, considering how much its operations do exceed the utmost power of dull and passive matter, I cannot but wonder that any man should be so forsaken of his reason, as to rank it among material things; for how is it possible that a

piece of dull unactive matter, that a little grass, or dirt, or mire, after all the refinings, macerations, and maturations that can be performed by the help of motion, should ever be able to make a thinking being, or grow up into the soul of a philosopher? that a company of dead atoms, which cannot move unless they are moved, can ever be capable of framing syllogisms in mood and figure, and disputing *pro* and *con*, whether they are atoms or no? that such inert and sluggish bodies should by their impetuous jostling together awaken one another out of their senseless passiveness, and make each other hear and feel their mutual knockings and jostlings; and then from this sense into which they have thus awakened one another, and (which they are as incapable of as a musical instrument is of hearing its own sounds, or taking pleasure in the harmonious airs that are played upon it) should proceed and consult together to make wise laws, and contrive the best models of government; to investigate the natures of things, and deduce from them the several systems of arts and sciences? In a word, how is it possible that a company of fluid motes and particles of matter should ever be so artificially complicated and twisted one with another, as to form an understanding that can lift up its eyes, and look beyond all this sensible world, into that of immaterial beings, and conceive abstracted notions of things which can never be objects to any material senses: such as a pure point, equality and proportion, symmetry and asymmetry of magnitudes, the rise and propagation of dimensions, infinite divisibility, and the like notions, that never were in matter, nor consequently could ever be extracted out of it: that can

correct the errors of all our material perceptions, and demonstrate things to be vastly different from what they apprehend and report them; can prove the sun, for instance, to be one hundred and sixty times bigger than the earth, when to our eye and imagination it appears no bigger than a bushel: that can lodge within itself all that mass of sensible things which taketh up so much room without it, and when it hath piled them up upon one another, in vast and most prodigious numbers, is still as capacious of more, as when it was altogether empty: in a word, that can grasp the universe with a thought, and comprehend the whole latitude of heaven and earth within its own indivisible centre. How senseless is it to imagine that such noble operations as these can be performed by a mere complex of dead atoms and senseless particles of matter! And if they cannot, as doubtless they cannot, then from hence it will necessarily follow, that the soul of man is an immaterial thing. Furthermore we see, that though the soul takes in objects of all sizes, yet when once they are in, they are not as bodies in a material place, in which the greater take up more room than the less: for the thought of a mile, or ten thousand miles, doth no more fill or stretch a soul, than that of a foot, or an inch, or a mathematical point. And whereas all matter hath its parts, and those extended one without another, into length, and breadth, and thickness, and so is measurable by inches, yards, or solid measures; there is no such thing as measurable extension in any thing belonging to the soul: for in cogitation, which is the essence of a soul, there is neither length, nor breadth, nor thickness; nor is it possible to have

any conceit of a foot of thought, or a yard of reason, a pound of wisdom, or a quart of virtue. And if what belongs to a soul be immaterial, it will necessarily follow that the soul itself is immaterial too, and as such capable of immortality. For immaterial natures being pure and simple, having neither contrary qualities nor divisible parts in them, as material things have, can have no principles of alteration and corruption in them; and being devoid of these, they must needs be capable of living and subsisting for ever. What noble beings therefore are the souls of men, which, together with those vast capacities of understanding, of moral perfection, of joy and pleasure, are naturally capable of immortality, and consequently of improving in knowledge, in goodness, and in joy and pleasure, unto all eternity! And therefore, certainly a soul must needs be a most precious thing, that can thus outlive all sublunary beings, and subsist for ever in so sublime a state of glory and beatitude.

Having thus shewn you the invaluable worth of the soul in respect of its own natural capacities, I proceed,

2. To shew you of what vast esteem it is in the judgment of all those who we must needs suppose to best understand the worth of it; and that is, the whole world of spirits. For to be sure, spirits must best understand the excellency of spirits, because they have a clearer insight into each other's natures, and a more immediate prospect of the virtue, power, and excellency of each other's faculties. For as for us, whilst we are in this embodied state, and do understand by corporeal organs, we generally judge of

the worth and excellency of things by the impression they make upon our senses; and as these are more or less gratified and affected with them, we set a higher or lower value upon them. Since therefore spirits are a sort of beings that cannot touch or affect our bodily senses, it is impossible we should be competent judges of the true worth and value of them; and therefore in this matter we ought to be guided by the judgment of spirits, who must needs be supposed to have a more intimate acquaintance with one another's natures: and if we will be guided by these, we shall find the whole world of spirits, even from the highest to the lowest, unanimously rating the souls of men at an inestimable price and value. And to make this appear, I shall shew you the vast price there is set upon them.

1. By God the Father.
2. By God the Son.
3. By God the Holy Ghost.
4. By the holy angels.
5. By the devils.

1. Let us consider the vast price which God the Father hath set upon souls. For when he intended to form these noble beings, and transmit them into terrestrial bodies, that so being compounded with a sensitive nature, they might clasp the spiritual and animal worlds together; he being sensible of the vast hazards and infinite snares they would be exposed to, was so deeply concerned for their preservation, that he thought nothing too dear to save and secure them: and foreseeing their fall from that terrestrial happiness which he originally designed them, notwithstanding the liberal care he had taken to preserve them in the state of innocence, he designed to

remove the scene of their happiness from earth to heaven, being resolved, if possible, to repair the loss of a terrestrial with a celestial paradise. For which end, instead of the covenant of innocence, the blessings whereof by their sin they had for ever forfeited, he introduces the covenant of repentance, that so by the help of this plank, after their general shipwreck, they might be preserved, and go safe to the shore of a happy eternity. And that by this covenant he might the more effectually recover them, he designed to grant it to them in such a way, and upon such a wise and weighty consideration, as might at once affect them with the greatest sense of his love and the deepest awe of his severity; that so, whilst by the former he allured, by the latter he might terrify to repentance: to which end, he determined not to grant it to them upon any other consideration than that of another's suffering for them, and undergoing the punishment of their sin in their stead; that so, whilst he shewed his love to them, in admitting another to suffer for them, he might express his hatred to their sin, in not pardoning it without another's suffering. And that he might manifest this his love to them, and this his hatred to their sin, in the highest degree, as he admitted another to suffer for us, so he resolved to accept no meaner suffering than that of his own beloved Son. And that this his suffering might be the more effectual, he proposed to send him down to us, into this lower world, clothed in our natures, that so he might not only the more familiarly instruct us by his doctrine and example, but the more exactly personate us in undergoing the punishment of our sin; and upon his undertaking to undergo it, the most merciful Father

agreed to this covenant of mercy, by which he obliged himself to receive us into his favour upon our unfeigned repentance, and empowered his Son to govern us, according to the tenor of it, that is, to crown us with the rewards of it, if we repented, and inflict on us the punishments of it, if we went on in our impenitence. And that there might be nothing wanting to render this government of his Son successful, and us obedient to it, he also agreed, upon this his mighty undertaking, to substitute to him the Holy Ghost, to be the supreme minister of his government, that so by the agency of this vicarious power, he might bow and incline the hearts of men to submit unto him, and comply with the terms of this merciful covenant, in which their everlasting welfare is so abundantly provided for.

This is the mighty project, which, for the sake of the souls of men, the Father of spirits hath contrived, and upon which he hath acted and proceeded, even from their first fall to this very moment: and by this he hath most plainly expressed the high and great veneration that he hath of them; for doubtless, had they not been exceeding precious in his eyes, he would never have thought it worth the while to project and act such mighty things to redeem and save them. He would rather have left them to their own fate, and not have concerned himself about them, or not have concerned himself to that degree, as to make them the subjects of such a vast design. For all wise agents measure their designs by the worth and value of the things they aim at, and do never lay great projects for the sake of little trifles; and unless God had a mighty value for the souls of men, his making such vast preparations to

save them would be like that foolish emperor's raising a numerous army only to go and gather cockle-shells.

2. Let us consider the vast price which God the Son hath set upon souls; for it is plain he valued them at that mighty rate, as that for their sakes he willingly undertook to execute this vast design of his Father, and that to save these precious beings he thought it would be very well worth his while to come down from heaven and veil his divinity in our natures; to *put on the form of a servant, and make himself of no reputation;* to live a miserable life, and die a painful and accursed death. And can we think he would ever have laid down so vast a price, as his glory and happiness, his life and blood amounts to, for things of a mean and inconsiderable value? Had he so low an esteem of his Father's bosom, and his own heavenly glory, as to part with them for trifles? such slight apprehensions of shame and sorrow, pain and misery, as to cast himself into them for the sake of beings he had little or no esteem of? Could any thing but what is inestimable countervail to that glory he parted with, and that misery he endured? or can you think those souls of little worth, which the Son of God thought worth his dying for? No, certainly, if we knew nothing of our souls but this, that the Son of God thought them a good purchase at the dear price of his bliss, his glory, and his blood; yet from thence we have infinite reason to conclude them most precious and inestimable beings, it being impossible that he, who doth so perfectly understand the worth and value of things, should ever be so overseen as to pay so vast a sum for slight and cheap commodities.

3. Let us consider the vast price which God the Holy Ghost hath set upon souls; for it is for their sakes that he doth so industriously operate in the kingdom of our Saviour, that he takes so much pains in it, as he doth, and hath always done ever since it was first erected, to drive on that blessed design of making the souls of men, the native subjects of it, happy. It is upon their account that he hath made so many revelations of God's will to the world, and confirmed them by so many miracles, that so he might extricate those precious beings out of those labyrinths of error in which they had involved and lost themselves, and direct them into the way to true happiness. And it is for their good that he still continues shedding forth his heavenly influences upon them; that he still inspires them with so many good thoughts, importunes them with such urgent motives, presses upon them with such earnest strugglings and vigorous efforts, not only of his preventing, but of his assisting grace too, that if possible he may awaken them into a sense of their danger, and excite and quicken them to pursue the methods of their own safety and happiness. So infinitely jealous is this blessed Spirit, lest these precious beings should miscarry, that though one would think them sufficiently safeguarded in their voyage through this dangerous sea under the convoy of their own reason, yet he dares not trust them to themselves, but bears them company all along, and keeps a watchful eye over them; and when any rock is nigh, he warns them of it; and when they are beset with evil spirits, those mischievous pirates that lie in wait to captivate and enslave them, he presently comes in to their assistance; and, unless they are resolved to

betray themselves, always brings them off victoriously. Nay, though they many times not only yield to these piratical spirits, but join their forces with them to resist and beat off their merciful friend and deliverer; yet he doth not therefore presently abandon them, but being infinitely concerned for their rescue, follows them even to the mouth of the enemy's harbour with his blessed motions and importunities, and never gives over the pursuit of them till he hath either actually recovered, or left them past all hopes of redemption. And when he sees that they are utterly lost by their own madness and folly, and that it is in vain to follow them any further, he casts a sorrowful look upon them, and like a grieved friend, after the utmost strugglings and extreme efforts of his affronted goodness, unwillingly leaves them to their own sad fate, and gives them up, as it were, with the tears in his eyes. And can you think this blessed Spirit would be so industrious as he is in his ministry for souls, that he would take such infinite pains to save them, be so extremely urgent and solicitous for their welfare, if he did not know them to be a sort of beings of an inestimable worth and value? O blessed God! what are not our souls worth, that are worth all the pains thy blessed Spirit takes to save and make them happy! that not only thou thoughtest worth all those vast thoughts and counsels, which thou hast spent upon them; that not only thy Son thought worth all those vast condescensions he stooped to, to put those thoughts in execution; but thy blessed Spirit also thinks worth all that unwearied pains and endeavour, all that incessant care and importunity which he employs about them to

save and rescue them from sin and misery! Doubtless, those beings must needs be exceeding precious, for whose safety and welfare all the blessed Trinity are so unspeakably concerned.

4. Let us consider the vast price which the holy angels put upon souls: for though they are the crown and top of all the creation of God, and do by their essential perfections border nearest upon him; yet such is their opinion of the souls of men, that they think it no disparagement to converse with and minister to them; but from the beginning of the world till now, have been always ready to maintain a close intercourse and intimate correspondence with them; and so far forth as they are permitted by the laws of their invisible world, they are continually attending to stretch forth a helping hand to them in all their needs and necessities. Though they are the most illustrious courtiers of heaven, yet they disdain not to be the life-guards of souls, *to pitch their tents round about them,* as the Psalmist expresses it, Psalm xxxiv. 7. and interpose between them and their danger; to prompt them to, and assist them in their duties; to strengthen them against, or to remove their temptations; to comfort them in their sorrows, and chase away from them those malignant spirits, that are always about them watching all opportunities to seduce and destroy them: hence Heb. i. 14. they are said to be *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.* And how much they are concerned for the safety and welfare of these precious beings they are charged with, is evident by that passage, Luke xv. 10. *There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* So consi-

derable are the lives of souls to the angels of God, that though they are always entertained with the most ravishing pleasures, yet heaven itself cannot divert them from being overjoyed at the repentance of a perishing soul, and celebrating its recovery with a new festival. And whenever the happy news is brought them, that such a dying soul is revived, they not only attend to it in the midst of all their joys and triumphs, but upon the hearing of it they shout for joy, and fill the heavens with a new acclamation. And whenever such a penitent soul hath bidden adieu to the body, those blessed spirits stand ready to receive and guard it through those legions of malignant spirits that do always infest these lower tracts of air, and to conduct it safe to those happy abodes where it is to lodge till the resurrection; for it is said of Lazarus's soul, Luke xvi. 22. that it *was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom:* all which is a clear demonstration of the vast esteem which those blessed angels have of souls. For can it be thought that such noble beings, who have a God and themselves to converse with, and have so immediate a prospect both of his beauty and their own, to exercise their faculties and employ their contemplation, would be so ready and willing as they are to attend upon souls, and minister to their safety and happiness, if they had not a mighty value and estimation of them? Surely, if these immortal spirits within us were not unspeakably dear and precious, those angelical beings, who have always the most sublime and enravishing objects before them to employ and entertain their faculties, would never have thought it worth the while to stickle so zealously in their affairs, and concern themselves so much about them: and

thus our Saviour himself argues, Matt. xviii. 10. *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven*; that is, Do not undervalue any soul; for how mean or little soever some of them may appear to you, they are under the guardianship of those blessed angels that are the courtiers of God, and do always attend upon his majestic presence.

5. And lastly, Let us consider the vast price which the devils themselves do put upon souls. For ever since those malignant spirits, through their own pride and ambition, revolted from God, and conspired to make war with heaven, and revenge their expulsion thence, the constant drift of all their designs and actions hath been to seduce and ruin them; being conscious, that of all the beings that are within the reach of their power, there are none so dear to God as these; and that by seducing from him these his most precious creatures, they shall do him the greatest spite, and most effectually revenge upon him their own damnation. For, doubtless, were there any beings below the moon more dear to God than these, they would bend their force and malice against them, and not make these, as they do, the only centres of their mischievous activity. Had they any nobler game to fly at, their ambitious malice would disdain to stoop to the quarry of souls; but because of all others these are the noblest and best worth the ruining, therefore do these malignant spirits turn all their artillery upon them, and level all their fiery darts against them. And how ambitious they are of seducing our souls, and training them on to perdition, is evident by the infinite wiles, and snares, and stra-

tagems they contrive against them; by their unwearied diligence to watch all opportunities against them; to surprise them where they are careless, and assault them where they are weakest, and cheat them with disguised suggestions; to inspect their humours, and apply themselves to their interest, and nick their tempers with convenient temptations: and if, after all their labour, craft, and contrivance, they can but seize the game they hunt for, the blood of a soul is so rich a draught, that they think it a sufficient recompense for all their painful and mischievous devices: for St. Peter tells us, that *they go about like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour.* And to be sure, those malignant spirits would never be so impertinently mischievous, as to spend their time in catching flies; and did they not know our souls to be noble preys, they would never go so far about as they do, nor take so much care and pains to catch and insnare them. So that from their unwearied diligence to seduce and ruin us, we may most certainly conclude, either that they are very foolish devils, or that our souls are very precious beings; but howsoever, their diligence to destroy them is a plain argument that they esteem them precious, it being by no means to be supposed, that such wise and intelligent beings as they are, would so much concern themselves, as they do, about things which they had little or no esteem for.

And thus you see at what a vast rate our souls are valued by the whole world of spirits: how from the highest to the lowest, those best and wisest judges of the just worth of souls do all unanimously concur in a great and high estimation. So that whether we value them by their own natural capacities, or by

the estimation of those who are best able to judge of their worth and excellency, we have abundant reason to conclude them most precious and inestimable beings. And now I shall conclude this argument with some inferences.

1. From hence I infer, by what it is that we ought to value ourselves, and estimate the dignity of our own natures; viz. by our rational and immortal souls, those excellent beings that are so invaluable in themselves, and so highly esteemed by the best and wisest judges. It is this intelligent and immortal nature within us, that is the crown and flower of our beings; it is by this that we are exalted above the level of mere animals; by this that we are allied to angels, and do border upon God himself: and he that values himself by any thing but his soul, and those things which are its proper graces and ornaments, begins at the wrong end of himself, forgets his jewels, and estimates his estate by his lumber. And yet, good God! what foolish measures do the generality of men take of themselves! Were we not forced by too many woful experiments, it would be hard to imagine that any creature that believes a rational and immortal soul to be a part of its nature, should be so ridiculous as to value itself by the little trifling advantages of a well-coloured skin, a suit of fine clothes, a puff of popular applause, or a few bags of white and red earth; and yet, God help us! these are the only things almost by which we value and difference ourselves from others. You are a much better man than your neighbour; he, alas! is a poor contemptible wretch, a little, creeping, despicable thing, not worthy to be looked upon, or taken notice of by such a one as you. Why, in the name of God, what is the matter?

where is this mighty difference between you and him? Hath not he a soul as well as you? a soul that is capable to live as long, and to be as happy as yours? Yes, yes, it is true indeed; but notwithstanding, God be thanked! you are anotherguess man than he; for you have a much handsomer body; your apparel is much more fine and fashionable; you live in a more splendid equipage, and have a larger purse to maintain it; and your name forsooth is more in vogue, and makes a far greater noise in the world! And is this all the difference between your mighty selves and your pitiful neighbours? Alas, poor men! a few days more will put an end to this; and when your rich attires are reduced to a windingsheet, and all your vast possessions to six foot of earth, what will become of all those little trifles by which you value yourselves? where will be the beauty or wealth, the port or garb, which you are now so proud of? Alas! now that lovely body looks as pale and ghastly, that lofty soul is left as bare, as poor, and naked, as your despised neighbour's. Should you now meet his wandering ghost in the wide world of spirits, what would you have to boast of more than he, now your beauty is withered, your wealth vanished, and all your outward pomp and splendour shrouded in the horrors of a silent grave? Now you will have nothing to distinguish you from the most contemptible, unless you have wiser and better souls; and by so much as you were more respected for your beauty and wealth, your garb and equipage in this world, by so much will you be more despised for your pride and insolence, your covetousness and sensuality in the other. Let us therefore learn to value ourselves by that which will abide by us, by our immortal souls, and

by those heavenly graces which do adorn and accomplish them; by our humility and devotion, by our charity and meekness, by our temperance and justice; all which are such preeminences as will survive our funerals, and distinguish us from base and abject souls for ever. But for a rational and immortal creature to prize itself by any such temporary advantages, is altogether as vain and ridiculous, as it was for the emperor Nero to value himself for being an excellent fiddler.

2dly, From hence also I infer, how much we are obliged to live up to the dignity of our natures. Should a stranger to mankind be admitted into this busy stage of human affairs, to survey our actions, and the paltry designs we drive at, certainly he would hardly imagine that we believed ourselves to be such a noble sort and strain of beings as we are. If you saw a man seriously employing himself in some sordid and beggarly drudgery, could you imagine that he believed himself to be the son of a king, and the heir of a crown? And when it is so apparent that the main of our design is to prog for our flesh, and make a comfortable provision for a few years' ease and luxury, who would think that we believed ourselves to be immortal spirits, that must live for ever in an inconceivable happiness or misery? When we consider the high rank which we hold in the creation, the vast capacities which there are in our natures, and the noble ends which we were made and designed for, are we not ashamed to think how poorly we prostitute ourselves, and vilify our own faculties by the sordid drudgeries wherein we exercise and employ them? When we think what a reputation we have throughout all the world of spirits, what

a vast rate we are valued at by God, and angels, and devils, are we not confounded to think how we undervalue ourselves by those low and inglorious ends which we pursue and aim at? O good God! that thou shouldest give me a soul of an immortal nature, a soul that is big enough for all the joys which thy everlasting heaven is composed of, and I be such a wretch to myself, such a traitor to the dignity of my own nature, as to give up myself and all my faculties to the pursuit of such vain and wretched trifles! that I, who am akin to angels, should make myself a muckworm, and choose Nebuchadnezzar's fate to leave crowns and sceptres, and live among the savage herds of the wilderness! that having such a great and noble nature, I should content myself to live like a beast, and aim no higher than if I had been born only to eat and drink, and sleep and wake, for thirty or forty years together, and then retire into a silent grave, and be insensible for ever! Wherefore, in the name of God, let us at last remember what we are, and what we are born to. Let us consider, that we have faculties that are capable of exerting themselves for ever, in the most enravishing contemplation and love of the eternal Fountain of truth and goodness; of copying and transcribing his most adorable perfections, his wisdom, goodness, purity, and justice, from whence the infinite happiness of his nature derives; and thereby of glorifying us into living images of God, and rendering us like him both in beauty and happiness: in a word, that we have faculties to converse with angels and with blessed spirits, to bear a part in the eternal comfort of their joys and praises, and to relish all those unknown delights of which their everlasting heaven doth consist. And

having such great and noble powers in us, is it not a burning shame that they should be always condemned to an endless pursuit of shadows and impertinencies? Let us therefore rouse up ourselves, and shake off this sordid and degenerate temper that sinks and depresses us, and makes us act so infinitely unbecoming the dignity of our immortal natures. And since we are descended from and designed for the heavenly family, let us learn to demean ourselves upon earth as becomes the natives of heaven: let us disdain all base and sordid, all low and unworthy ends of action, as things beneath our illustrious rank and station in the world of beings, and live in a continual tendency towards, and preparation for, that heavenly state, which is the proper orb and sphere of our natures.

3dly, From hence also I infer, how much they undervalue themselves that sell their souls for the trifles of this world. For since we know beforehand, that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men*, and he hath plainly assured us that our souls must smart for ever for our sins; it necessarily follows, that whenever we knowingly suffer ourselves to be enticed into sin, we make a wilful forfeiture of our souls. He that knows that such a draught, however sweetened and made palatable, is yet compounded with the juice of deadly nightshade, and notwithstanding that, will have the poisonous draught, is wilfully bent to murder and destroy himself.

And when we see that the pleasure of our sin draws after it the ruin of our souls, and yet will sin notwithstanding, we do in effect stake our souls against it, and with our eyes open make this despe-

rate bargain; that upon condition we may enjoy such a sinful pleasure, we will willingly surrender up our immortal spirits to the pains of an endless and intolerable damnation. And if so, O blessed God! how do the generality of men depreciate and undervalue themselves! For how often do we see men, in their little frauds and cozenages, sell their souls for a penny gain; in their lascivious and intemperate humours, barter their souls for a moment's mirth or pleasure; in their ambitious projects and designs, part with their souls for a blast of vulgar breath and popular noise! For in every temptation to sin, the Devil cheapens our immortal souls; bids so much pleasure or so much profit for them; and in every compliance with the temptation we take his offer, and strike the fatal bargain: so that if we will sin, we had need sin for something, since we must pay so dearly for it. But, alas! there is no proffer the Devil can make us, that is a tolerable price for the blood of our souls. Though he should offer us the whole world for it, our Saviour assures us that he would bid us infinitely to our loss: and if so, what wretched sales do we make of our souls, when we sin for trifles, lie and cheat to get a penny, consent to a wicked motion for a pleasure that will wither while we are smelling to it, and expire in the very enjoyment! For so much we value our souls at, and do in effect declare, that in our esteem these precious beings, which God and angels set so high a price on, are worth no more than what that profit or pleasure, for which we sin, amounts to. O good God! what cheap and worthless things then are our souls in our esteem, who sell and barter them every day for such mean and worthless trifles! How do we part with our gold

for dross, and exchange our jewels for pebbles! what sordid thoughts, what wretched vile opinions have we of ourselves, that are so ready upon all occasions to sell ourselves for nought, or, which is next to nought, for the sorry proffers of every base and infamous lust! O would to God we would at last make but a just estimate of ourselves, and thereupon resolve, as it is most reasonable we should, never to comply with any sinful motion, till we can get more by it than our souls are worth; and then I am sure we should be for ever deaf to all the proffers which the Devil or world can make us.

4thly, and lastly, From hence also I infer, how much we are obliged above all things to take care of our souls. For since they are beings of such vast capacities in themselves, and of such an high estimation in the world of spirits, methinks we should all be convinced that to take leave [care] of their welfare, and prevent their everlasting miscarriage, is the highest concern and interest of a man. And yet, God forgive us, if we consult the common practice of mankind, we shall find that there is scarce any thing in which we have any interest at all, that is more slighted and disregarded by us. Our body is the darling that hath our hearts, and takes up all our care and thoughts; and to entertain its appetite, and accommodate it with pleasures and conveniences, there is no expense either of labour or time grudged, or thought much of; but as for the soul, that precious and immortal thing, which will be living, and perceiving unspeakable pleasures or pains when this body is dead and insensible, that is overlooked as a thing not worthy our serious notice or regard. And though we cannot but be sensible how much it is

diseased in all its faculties, how much its understanding is overloaded with error and ignorance, its will festered with unreasonable malice and obstinacy, and its conscience oppressed with loads of guilt sufficient to sink it to the nethermost hell; yet we seem, for the generality, to be no more concerned at it, than if its ruin or recovery were equally indifferent to us. We can see it perishing before our eyes without any remorse or compassion; we can pass day after day without making the least offer or attempt to recover it, without offering up a prayer for it, or entertaining a serious thought what will become of it for ever. O insensible creatures that we are, thus to neglect and abandon the most precious part of ourselves! the part that makes us men, and by which alone we are capable of being happy or miserable for ever. Let me therefore beseech and conjure you, even by all that is sacred and serious, by every thing that is dear and precious to you, by your best hopes, and the most important concern of your everlasting fate, to take pity upon your perishing souls; to consider the amazing dangers whereunto you have exposed them, and to consult the means of their recovery; to prick and affect your hearts with the sense and consideration of their impending ruin, till you have forced them to cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* to bathe their wounds with the tears of repentance, and to pour into them that most sovereign balm of a serious purpose and resolution of amendment; to pray earnestly for them, and keep a continual guard about them, and to strive vigorously with those sinful inclinations that threaten to sink and ruin them. And if we will be but content to undergo these ne-

cessary cares and pains to secure them, we shall be sure, when they leave these bodies, to reap the fruits of all, in the possession of an unspeakably happy and glorious eternity.

II. I proceed now to the second proposition contained in these words, That our precious souls may be lost. And this our Saviour here plainly supposes, *If he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.* The Greek word is ζημιωθῇ, which properly signifies to receive a mulct, or to suffer damage; and therefore it is here opposed to κερδήσῃ, *if he shall gain.* So that the word doth not denote the absolute loss or extinction of the soul, but its undergoing some dreadful mulct, or suffering some irreparable damage: for, as Hierocles hath observed, ὡς οἷόν τε ἀθανάτῳ οὐσίᾳ θανάτου μοίρας μεταλαχεῖν, οὐ τῇ εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἐκβάσει, ἀλλὰ τῇ τοῦ εὖ εἶναι ἀποπτώσει, "immortal "substances cannot so die as to lose their being, but "so as to lose their well-being they may." And accordingly our Saviour himself calls the punishment of the wicked in hell-fire, destroying them, Matt. x. 28. *Fear not them which kill the body—but fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* Where by *destroying*, he doth not mean putting a final end to their being, but putting them into an irrecoverable state of ill-being; for in this state of destruction they still continue to act, to weep and wail, and gnash their teeth, as Christ elsewhere tells us, Matt. xiii. 42. which actions plainly suppose their continuance in being, though in a most wretched and deplorable ill-being. So that by the loss of the soul here is not meant the destruction of its being, but its being exposed to an irreparable damage in the other world. And to prove that in

this sense a soul may be lost, I shall endeavour these two things.

First, To shew you what damages the soul is liable to in the other world.

Secondly, Upon what accounts it is liable to and in danger of them.

1. What damages the soul is liable to in the other world. To which I answer, that there is a sevenfold damage whereunto the soul of man may be exposed hereafter.

1st, It is liable to be deprived of the highest happiness it is capable of.

2dly, It is liable to the most dreadful punishment and correction of the Father of spirits.

3dly, It is liable to the fury and violence of devils, and other malignant spirits.

4thly, It is liable to be confined to the most dismal and uncomfortable abodes.

5thly, It is liable to the perpetual vexations of its own cross, wild, and furious passions.

6thly, It is liable to the intolerable anguish of its own guilty conscience.

7thly, It is liable to endure all these dismal things for ever.

1st, The soul of man is liable to be deprived of the highest happiness it is capable of. The highest happiness that a soul is capable of, is to enjoy God; that is, to know, and love, and resemble him, and to be admitted into the noble society of those pure and blessed spirits that do thus enjoy him; of all which happiness a soul may be for ever deprived by its own vicious and depraved temper. For besides that by such a temper it may provoke the just and holy God, who hath the disposal of the fate of souls, to

deprive it of and banish it from this happiness for ever; it may thereby also utterly incapacitate itself from ever enjoying it; it may promote and raise that temper to such a degree of aversation and antipathy to God, and canker it into such an inveterate enmity to all the perfections of his nature, as that at last it may be utterly incapable of any such beatifical knowledge of them, as can any ways incline it to love and imitate him: for the apostle tells us, that *the carnal mind is enmity to God*, Rom. viii. 7. From whence it is evident, that in every degree of sin there is a degree of aversation to God, which aversation may be improved into such an implacable malice against him, as that our knowledge of him, instead of endearing him to us, or engaging us to imitate him, may only avert us from, provoke, and irritate us against him, and by presenting to us those immense perfections, for which he deserves our dearest love and deepest adoration, may only fill our minds with the greater rage and more invincible horror. And when the soul is arrived to such a degree of malignity against God, it is as impossible for it to enjoy him, as to be recreated with torment, or delighted with the objects of its own antipathies. And for the same reason also it must be incapable of enjoying the society of blessed spirits, because it hath acquired a temper that is infinitely repugnant to their heavenly genius; so that if such a prejudiced soul should, when it is arrived into eternity, find the gates of heaven open to receive it, it would doubtless be so offended at every thing that is heavenly, so startled at the sight of God, and the displays of his hated perfections, and seized with such a horror against those godlike beings that dwell

there, and are perpetually contemplating and adoring, loving and imitating him, that it would fly away of its own accord from that blissful habitation, as bats and owls do from the light of the day, and rather choose to banish itself into eternal darkness and despair, than be shut up for ever in a heaven so infinitely repugnant to its nature. And certainly to be thus excommunicated from the supreme happiness of our natures, and be forced to live in everlasting exile from God and blessed spirits, and wander about like wretched vagabonds that are chased and driven from all hopes of contentment, will be unspeakable damage to our souls.

2dly, The soul of man is liable to the most dreadful punishment and correction of the Father of spirits. There is no doubt but spiritual agents can strike as immediately upon spirits, as bodily agents can upon bodies; and though we who are spectators only of corporeal action cannot discern the manner how one spirit acts upon another, yet there is no reason to doubt of the thing; and if there be such a mutual communication of action between them, there is no doubt but they can mutually make each other feel each other's pleasures and displeasures: and if so, then it is only to suppose that the less powerful spirits are subject to the violent impression of the more powerful ones, and consequently, that all finite spirits are liable to the lash of an infinite one; for why should it be more difficult for the Father of our spirits to correct our spirits, than it is for the parents of our flesh to correct our flesh? For though our souls are no more impressible with material stripes than sunbeams are with the blows of a hammer, yet are they liable to horrid and dismal

thoughts, and to be as much pained and aggrieved by them, as our bodies are by the most exquisite torments. So that if God be displeased with us, he can imprint his wrath upon our minds in black and ghastly thoughts, and cause it perpetually to drop like burning sulphur upon our souls. He cannot only abandon us to the furious reflections of our own natural consciences, which, as I shall shew you by and by, will be hereafter extremely painful and vexatious, but he can also infuse supernatural horrors into us, and pour in such swarms of terrible thoughts upon us, as will give us no rest, but sting us perpetually day and night with inexpressible anguish. And of this you have a woful example in that miserable wretch Francis Spira, who, upon that fearful breach he made in his conscience, by a cowardly renouncing of his religion, was, without any symptoms of a bodily melancholy, immediately seized with such an inexpressible agony of mind, as amazed his physicians, astonished his friends, and struck terror into all that conversed with him: for he was so near to the condition of a damned ghost, that he verily believed hell itself was more tolerable than those invisible lashes that were continually laid upon his soul, and therefore wished he were in hell, and would gladly have despatched himself thither, in hope to find sanctuary there from those vengeful thoughts which continually preyed upon his soul. And if in this world our soul is so liable to the rod of the Father of spirits, we may be sure it will be so in the other too, where God, if he pleases, can render it an eternal hell to itself, by pouring continually into it fresh floods of horrible thoughts, which being thrust on by an almighty power, and

perpetually urged and repeated on the mind, must necessarily create in it, not only exquisite, but uninterrupted torment. And it being in his power thus to lash our souls, to be sure when once he is implacably incensed against them, (as he will be hereafter, if we do not appease him,) he will let loose his power upon them, and make them feel his wrathful resentments in those dire and frightful thoughts, with which he will sting and scourge them for ever. And if the soul carry into eternity with it those provoking lusts which do here incense God's displeasure against it, it will there have no shelter from the storm of his vengeance, which, like a shower of fire and brimstone, will be continually pouring down upon it. For while it continues in this shop of vanities, it hath a great variety of objects to divert those dismal thoughts which God many times infuses into it; but in the other world, all these diverting objects will be removed, and then every dismal thought which God lets loose will seize and fasten upon it, and, like Prometheus's vultures, prey on its wretched heart for ever.

3dly, The soul of man is liable to the fury and violence of devils and other malignant spirits. For whenever the souls of men do leave their bodies, they doubtless flock with the birds of their own feather, and consort themselves with such separate spirits as are of their own genius and temper; for besides that likeness doth naturally congregate beings, and cause them to associate with their own kind, good and bad spirits are by the eternal laws of the other world distributed in two separate nations, and there live apart from one another, having no other communication or intercourse but what is

between two hostile countries, that are continually designing and attempting one against another. So that when wicked souls do leave this terrestrial abode, and pass into eternity, they are presently incorporated, by the laws of that invisible world, into the nation of wicked spirits, and confined for ever to their most wretched society and converse; and then how miserable must their condition be who are damned to such a hellish neighbourhood, and are allowed no other company but devils and devilish spirits! For since, as I have already shewed you, spirits can as well act upon one another as bodies, what can be expected when such malignant spirits meet, but that they should be continually snarling among themselves, and baiting and worrying one another? When wrath and envy, malice and ill-nature, are the common genius that inspires and acts the whole society, what can their conversation be but a continual intercourse of mutual mischiefs and vexations; especially considering how they have here laid the foundations of an eternal quarrel against one another? For there the companions in sin will meet, who by their ill counsels, wicked insinuations, and bad examples, did mutually contribute to each other's ruin: and when these shall meet in that woful state, how will the tormenting sense of those irreparable injuries they have done each other incite them to exercise their hellish fury upon, and play the devils with one another! And when a company of waspish spirits so implacably incensed against one another shall meet, and like so many scorpions, snakes, and adders, be shut up together in the infernal dens, how is it possible they should forbear

hissing at, and stinging and spitting venom in one another's faces? But then, besides the mutual plagues which those incensed and furious spirits must needs be supposed to inflict upon one another, they will be also nakedly exposed to the powerful malice of the devils, those fierce executioners of God's righteous vengeance, who, as we now find by experience, have power to suggest black and horrid thoughts, and to torture our souls with such dreadful imaginations, as are far more sharp and exquisite than any bodily torment. And if now they have such power over us, when God thinks fit to let them loose, what will they have hereafter, when these our wretched spirits shall be wholly abandoned to their mercy, and they shall have a free scope to exercise their fury upon us, and glut their hungry malice with our vexations and torments? It seems at least a mighty probable notion, that that horrid agony of our Saviour in the garden, which caused him to shriek and groan, and sweat as it were great drops of blood, was only the effect of those preternatural terrors which the devils, with whom he was then in combat, impressed upon his innocent mind. And if they had so much power over his pure and mighty soul, that was so strongly guarded with the most perfect and unspotted virtues, what will they have over ours, when God hath abandoned us to them, and throws us as preys into their mouths! With what an hellish rage will they fly upon our guilty and timorous souls, in which there is so much tinder for their injected sparks of horror to take fire on! When therefore our guilty spirits shall not only be liable to the scourge of God, but devils and damned

ghosts too shall have their full swing at them, doubtless the hell within them will be far more intolerable than any hell of fire and brimstone without them.

4thly, The soul of man is also liable to be confined to the most dismal and uncomfortable abodes. What or where the abode of wicked spirits is, till the morn of the resurrection, is no where expressly determined in the holy scripture; but since, wheresoever they are, they are doubtless under the power and dominion of the Devil, who, as the scripture assures us, is *prince of the power of the air*, it is highly probable that their present residence is in these lower regions of the world; that either being chased by those infernal powers, under whose tyranny they are, they are continually hurrying about in these inferior tracts of air; or, which perhaps is more probable, that they are imprisoned by those invisible ministers of the divine justice, within the dark abysses and under-ground vaults of the earth; and not permitted, but upon special occasions, to come abroad into this upper region of light and liberty. But wheresoever they are, it is doubtless in some such horrid and dismal prison as is fit only to receive such vile and desperate malefactors, and secure them till the great assizes, when they shall be brought forth to receive their trial and final judgment: and then, being united to their bodies, and thereby made liable to corporeal torments, the scripture expressly affirms, that they shall be shut up in everlasting flames, and be tormented for ever in a lake of fire and brimstone; for then the Lord himself shall come in flames of fire, to render vengeance to all those that obeyed not his gospel: and having with those raging flames set every part of this lower world on

fire, he will reascend with all his train to the celestial mansions, and leave the wicked weltering for ever in this burning vault below: for it is plain, that the everlasting fire to which he will then sentence them is the conflagration of the world, which, after the just are raised, and caught up in the clouds above the reach of its aspiring flames, shall break forth on every side, and turn all this atmosphere into a furnace of unquenchable fire, and therein shall those wicked miscreants, that would not be reclaimed, be condemned to live for ever. For the judgment being ended, the Judge and all his retinue shall return, and leave them in the midst of a burning world, surrounded with smoke and fire, darkness and confusion; and wrapt in fierce and merciless flames, which shall stick close to, and pierce through and through their bodies, and for ever prey upon, but never consume them. And what an intolerable mulct this is, I leave every man's natural sense to judge.

5thly, The soul of man is also liable to the perpetual vexations of its own cross, wild, and furious passions. We have sufficient experience in this life, how vexatious our cross and excessive passions are; for when our passions are divided, and contrary objects have raised contrary desires and appetites in us, how do they rend and distract our souls, and cause perpetual mutinies and tumults within us! But by reason of those many sensual gratifications, with which we now make a shift to stop the mouths of those daughters of the horseleech, when they cry out, *Give, give*, we cannot be so sensible of the trouble and vexation of them: unless we now subdue and mortify them, we shall be forced to carry them into eternity along with us. For by being separated from

their bodies, the souls of men are never separated from their prevailing tempers, but in their separated state are for the main of the same disposition as they were here, and do retain the same passions and appetites. It is true, they cannot be supposed to retain their bodily appetites after they have thrown off their bodies, but when they have wholly accustomed themselves in this life to fleshly pleasures, and have never experienced spiritual ones, it is impossible but that in the other they should be tormented with an outrageous desire of being embodied again; that so being incapable of relishing any other, they may repeat those fleshly pleasures which heretofore they were accustomed to, and act over the brutish scene anew. And this vehement hankering of these carnalized souls to return into their bodily state is perhaps the only sensuality that a separate soul is capable of; but it is such a sensuality as must necessarily render such souls extremely miserable; for in that state it will be like the hunger of a starving man, that is immured between two dead walls; that is, it will be a fierce desire without hope of satisfaction; a corroding hunger sharpened with despair of food; than which there is nothing more intolerably grievous and tormenting. For how will it vex the wretched spirit to look back from the shores of eternity into this corporeal world, and to ruminate thus with itself; "O miserable creature that I am! here "am I cast away for ever upon a strange and deso-"late shore, where I must famish for want of food, "pine away a long eternity, and wander to and fro "for ever, tormented with restless rage, and hungry "unsatisfied desires; where is not one pleasure that "I can relish, not an object that I can taste any

" sweetness in. Wo is me! yonder are all my joys
" and comforts, all that is dear and precious to me.
" O that I might go back again, and be once more
" restored to the enjoyment of them! But, alas!
" between me and them there runs an impassable
" gulf, that deprives me of all hope of returning."
For thus will the unhappy soul torment itself with an outrageous longing for that which it can never hope to enjoy. But then, besides this appetite of sensuality, which it will there be vexed with, it will also carry along with it all that envy and malice, that wrath and impatience, pride and insolence which it here contracted; which black and hellish passions will prove perpetual furies in its bosom: for in that wretched state it will not only have objects always present to excite them, but such objects too as will excite them all at once to the most outrageous excesses. For when all at once it shall see others advanced to the greatest heights of glory and happiness, and itself not only rejected, but abandoned to endless misery; the sense of this must necessarily irritate all its devilish passions to the highest extremities, and cause its pride to swell, its envy to burst, and its wrath to boil into a diabolical fury; and what a continual hell must this create in the soul, to be perpetually worried with so many black and rabid passions; to have all its inferior parts and affections, like those of the monster Scylla, whom the poets talk of, as so many dogs, continually barking and snarling at one another, and yet remain unseparable, as being comparts of the same substance.

6thly, The soul of man is also liable to the intolerable anguish of its own guilty conscience. *The spirit of a man*, says Solomon, *can bear his infirmities, but*

a wounded spirit who can bear? intimating, that of all the passions which human nature is liable to, there are none so grievous as that of a mind awakened with a sense of guilt. And of the truth of this we have some experience even in this life, though now we can make a shift either to divert ourselves by our sensual mirth and jollities, from listening to the clamours of our guilty minds, or else to deceive ourselves into a groundless peace, by indulgent and fallacious principles; but unless we expiate our guilts here, we shall carry them into eternity with us, where all those sensual pleasures, with which we now divert ourselves from reflecting on our actions, will be removed, and all those fallacious principles, with which we cheat and deceive ourselves, will be baffled by a woful experience. So that then our soul will be nakedly exposed to the lash of its own furious thoughts, and having nothing to guard or defend itself against the cutting reflections of a guilty conscience, which being roused up and kept awake by the unintermitting sense of our misery, will be always clamouring upon us, and continually torturing our wretched minds with sharp and vexatious reflections: and besides, whilst our soul doth act by bodily instruments, and work in this mire of flesh, it is impossible it should be so nimble and expedite in its motions, as it will be when it is a naked spirit. For then its perceptions will be much clearer, its convictions more strong and evident, and all its reflections active as the lightning, and quick as the wing of an angel. So that whereas now the sharpest stings of our conscience have an intermixture of fancy and imagination in them, being gross and material powers do dull and rebate the edge of them, and render

them less pungent and sensible; when we are stripped out of our flesh, and sent naked into the other world, we shall have no clog about us to break or allay those sharp reflections with which we shall be forced to lash ourselves for ever. And then our conscience will cut to the quick, and sting with a corroding venom; then will the remembrance of those guilts which brought our miseries upon us rouse up such a swarm of horrors in our minds, as we shall be able neither to avoid nor endure. For the sense of our misery will be every moment suggesting those guilts to our minds that were the cause of it, and continually upbraiding us with those desperate follies by which we ran ourselves into it; the consideration of which will cause us to hate and curse ourselves for ever, and to discharge our fury upon our own heads, which will make our soul turn devil to itself, and force it to be its own executioner. For it being now conscious to itself, that its miseries are nothing else but the rueful and pitiless deserts of its own folly and madness, it will be continually meditating horrible reflections, and singing satires on itself. So that while it is wandering among wretched ghosts through the dismal shades below, it will never cease lashing itself with its own sharp and stinging thoughts, till it hath chafed itself into a fury, and boiled up its self-condemning rage into everlasting madness.

7thly, and lastly, The soul of man is also liable to endure all these dismal things for ever. For that our souls are naturally immaterial and immortal, I have already proved; so that if God, in his infinite justice, shall think fit to sentence wicked souls irrecoverably to all these abovenamed miseries, they

must, by the constitution of their own natures, live in and undergo them for ever. And that he doth think to pronounce and execute such a sentence upon them, he himself hath assured us; for so in scripture he hath plainly declared, that their punishment shall be everlasting, Matt. xxv. 7. *These*, saith he, speaking of the wicked, *shall go away into everlasting punishment:* and accordingly the fire in and with which they are to be punished is called *everlasting fire*, Matt. xxv. 41. and that they shall subsist for ever in this fire, and be coeternal with it, is evident by those passions and actions that are attributed to them in it; for, Rev. xiv. 11. they are said to *have no rest day nor night* in it, but to be in a continual unintermitting fever, that will necessarily burn and scorch them, and not allow them the least intervals of ease and comfort. And in Matt. xiii. 42. the bitter anguish which they shall endure in this fire is described by their *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth;* which actions are plain indications, not only of their subsisting in this everlasting fire, but of the extreme horror and anguish that they shall therein endure. And indeed when God sentences any immortal being to misery, its misery must be supposed to continue as long as it lives, and consequently to continue for ever, since it is to subsist and live for ever. And what a fearful accession is this to all those abovenamed miseries! If we were to endure the softest and most gentle pain, without any interval, for thirty, forty, or a hundred years, the prospect of that which is to come would render that which is present so intolerable, that we should quickly grow weary of our lives, and wish ourselves in our graves. Lord! what shall we then do, when

we come to languish out a long eternity in the tormenting agonies of damned ghosts! How will it imbitter every present torment to us, to think of that never-ending duration of torment to come; that after we have consumed millions of millions of ages on the rack, we have still an eternal hell behind, and are as far distant from the end of our misery, as we were when it first began! O, now if we could die, and be insensible for ever, what welcome tidings would it be! How gladly should we receive that fatal blow that could put an end to a woful eternity! But now it will be in vain for us to cry, "O death, "death, have mercy upon us, and despatch us quickly "into an eternal grave!" For death is deaf, and cannot hear; every moment it stabs and wounds, but, woe is me! it cannot kill; it strikes and strikes, but cannot strike home, and so is forced to continue as struggling under the pangs of an immortal death. If there were any prospect of an end of our misery, though it were after a million of ages, this would give some ease to the languishing sufferer; but never, never——O how that fatal word stabs the wretched soul, and rankles its anguish into eternal desperation! For to be in extreme misery, and see no end of it, is the perfection of hell, and the utmost possibility of damnation.

And thus have I endeavoured to represent unto you the fearful mulcts our souls are liable to in the other world, which are such as, one would think, were sufficient to awaken the most stupid and insensible creature.

2. I now pass on to the second thing proposed, which was to shew you upon what accounts it is that our souls are liable to these dreadful things; or

what it is that exposes us to the danger of them. In general, it is our own sin and wickedness, which doth not only incense the holy God against us, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, and provoke and urge him to inflict these endless miseries upon us as the just retributions of our desperate folly and obstinacy, but doth also, by its own natural causality, prepare us for and sink us into that miserable state: so that if God should not damn us, yet our own wickedness would; the misery of damnation being little else but the perfection and consummation of sin. For the sting of eternal as well as temporal death is sin; and it is goodness and wickedness that makes heaven and hell, those two opposite hemispheres of the invisible world: and as, if goodness were plucked out of heaven, it would cease to be heaven, and be overcast immediately with the dismal shades of hell; so, if wickedness were banished out of hell, it would be hell no longer, but presently clear up into light and serenity, and shine forth into a glorious heaven: but wheresoever sin and wickedness reigns, there is hell and damnation in its necessary causes. Since therefore, in necessary causes, that which is the cause of the cause, is also the cause of the effect; our best way to be resolved what it is that renders us liable to these future miseries, will be to inquire what it is that renders us liable to fall into a sinful condition at the present; for whatsoever renders us liable to sin, must necessarily expose us to the danger of misery. Now the danger of our falling into and continuing in a state of sin proceeds from these following causes:

1st, From the natural liberty of our wills to good and evil.

2dly, From the many temptations to evil among which we are placed.

3dly, From the more close and intimate access which these temptations have to us, than the contrary motives to goodness.

4thly, From the great correspondence of these temptations with the corrupt inclinations of our nature.

5thly, From the unwearied diligence and great subtilty of the Devil to make use of and apply these temptations to us.

6thly, From the plausible pretences we are furnished with to excuse and justify our compliance with them.

7thly, From the extreme difficulty which this our compliance brings us under, to reject and vanquish them for the future.

1. We are liable to fall into a sinful state, and from thence into eternal misery, from the natural liberty of our wills to good and evil. If indeed we were necessarily determined to good, our happiness would be entailed upon our natures; and it would be as impossible for us to be miserable, as it is for the fire to freeze, or for the ice to burn; but to be so determined, I am apt to think, is not consistent with the condition of a creature. For to be good by a natural necessity requires an infallible understanding, or a mind that is infinitely removed from all possibility of being deceived and mistaken; and this no finite mind can be: but how should the will be in all particulars necessarily determined to what is right, so long as it is under the conduct of a fallible mind, that hath a natural possibility of misleading it? So that to be naturally, necessarily, and essen-

tially good, seems to be an incommunicable prerogative of the divine nature, according to that of our Saviour, *There is none good save one, and that is God*, Luke xviii. 19. For since no will can be essentially good but that which is guided by an infallible mind, and no mind can be essentially infallible but that which is infinite in knowledge; it hence necessarily follows, that to be free to good and evil, is as natural to reasonable creatures, as it is to be finite in knowledge and understanding. It is true, the greater light of knowledge there is in the mind, the less freedom to evil there must be in the will, unless it hath some antecedent bias and inclination to evil; and consequently the angels being of far more intelligent natures than we men, must needs be naturally less free to evil; but yet that even they are naturally free to it is evident, for that some of them have actually lapsed into devils; and if they are so by their natures, then much more are we by ours, who are so much their inferiors in the rational world. For as we are finite intelligences, we must necessarily have some degree of freedom to evil in us, but as we are of the lowermost rank of intelligences, we must naturally have greater degrees of this freedom in us than any other order of intelligent natures: and if this were all, yet this very condition of our natures renders us more liable to degenerate into an evil and sinful state, than any other kind of reasonable creatures. If we were now in a state of perfect innocence, yet of all intelligent creatures we should have the greatest reason to apprehend the danger of our fall; because being the least intelligent, we have the greatest freedom to evil, and consequently are on that account

in the greatest danger of falling into it. By the very condition of our natures, we are of all rational creatures placed nearest to the brinks of the fatal precipice, and therefore have most reason to apprehend the danger of falling headlong into it. For doubtless among innocent creatures there are none so near the danger of sinning as those whose wills are least restrained from it, and therefore, though we were now as innocent as the blessed angels are, yet our condition would be unspeakably more unsafe; because by how much we fall short of them in knowledge and understanding, by so much we should exceed them in our freedom to evil, and consequently be so much the more liable to it. But this, alas! is the least of our danger; for,

2dly, We are liable to fall into a sinful state, and from thence into eternal misery, from the many temptations to evil among which we are placed. For this state of being in which we now are, being intended by God for our trial and probation, it was requisite, in order thereunto, that we should be placed among difficulties, that we might have sufficient opportunity to exercise our skill and courage in religion; for unless we had some such difficulties to encounter, there could no proof or trial be made of our virtue. Hence therefore hath God placed our rational souls in mortal bodies, which do naturally abound with brutish appetites and desires, and compassed us round with this world of sensual goods and evils, which continually importunes and excites them, that so we might have sufficient opportunity to exercise those human virtues which consist in the dominion of our rational faculties over these our bodily appetites and desires; that we might never want

occasion to give the most glorious proofs of our patience and chastity, temperance and equanimity, meekness and sobriety; all which are proper to us as beings made up of soul and body, whence all those brutish appetites arise, in the good or bad government whereof consists the nature of human virtue and vice. So that this present state of human life is intended by God for a field of combat between reason and sense, between the law in our minds and the law in our members; and that the victory of reason might, through the difficulty of it, be rendered more glorious and remarkable, he hath furnished its antagonist, viz. the bodily appetite, with various weapons; with the temptations of a world of sensitive goods and evils, to assault and oppose it, to try its metal, and exercise both its active and passive virtues; and upon the success of this combat depends the everlasting fate of the soul. If sense prevail, and lead her finally captive into vice and wickedness, she is lost for ever; but if reason get the victory, and finally reduce the desires and appetites of sense under the dominion of virtue, when this mortal life ends she shall triumph for ever, and be translated hence into a free and disentangled state, where she shall be vexed and enticed no more with the importunities of sensual lusts and affections, but to all eternity enjoy the serenity and pleasure of a pure intellectual being. This being therefore the true state of affairs, it is too too obvious how liable the soul is to miscarry, when it is placed in a body among so many brutish passions and appetites, and that body is placed in a tempting world, among so many sensitive goods and evils that are continually importuning those appetites to mutiny against

reason, and carry us away captive into folly and wickedness. How much reason have we to look about us, when we are placed in the midst of so many dangers, and have such numberless snares on every side ready to decoy and entangle us? But this is not all neither; for,

3dly, We are liable also to fall into a sinful state, and from thence into eternal misery, from the more close and intimate access which these temptations have to us, than the contrary motives to goodness. For the great advantage which these temptations to vice have over the most powerful motives to virtue, is this, that they are all of them present and sensible; for as for those grand motives to goodness, that are drawn from the consideration of our future state, they propose to our hopes and fears those mastersprings of our motions, such goods and evils as are a great way off, and beyond the prospect of our bodily senses, which makes the landscape of them appear exceeding dim and faint upon the mind; their futurity, which is one sort of distance, causing them, like things afar off, to look confused and indistinct, by reason of which they cannot affect us so powerfully, and draw such strong and lasting draughts of themselves upon our minds: for goods, like magnets, have always the strongest attractions when they are nearest; but as for those invisible goods of the other world, they are at such a distance from us, that they can hardly reach us who live upon the remotest circumference of the sphere of their attraction. And as distance lessens all objects to the eye, and renders them much smaller in appearance than they are in reality; so the remote futurity of those eternal goods, which the motives of virtue do propose, detracts

from their just magnitude, and makes them, though unspeakably vast in themselves, appear exceeding small and inconsiderable to our shortsighted minds. And the same is to be said of those future evils also which they denounce against us; and besides, being not only remote, but invisible too, they cannot strike upon our senses, by which the most vigorous impressions of things are made upon our minds; whereas the temptations of vice are all present and sensible, and do so circle us round as soon as we look abroad into the world, that, which way soever we turn our eyes, they are still before us, thrusting themselves into our minds, and with their constant importunity stirring and working our desires. So that whenever these outward goods or evils do assault us, we lie bare and open to them, and they continually press so close upon our senses, that we are not able to avoid their impressions: when any outward good invites us to a sinful action, it hath the vast advantage of being present and sensible; by reason of which, it having a more immediate access to our minds, doth many times prevail before we can rally up a sufficient strength of considerations against it; and when we set ourselves to resist and struggle with it, the best of our weapons is a company of thin and faint notions of things afar off, things that we never saw nor felt; which whilst we are recollecting, the vice we are tempted to hath its powers ready to seize upon the will, which having oftentimes experienced the pleasure it invites to, is the more easily seduced to a fresh compliance. And whilst our enemies are so near us, and our helps and succours so far off, we must needs acknowledge our danger very great and urgent.

4thly, We are liable to fall into a sinful state, and from thence into eternal misery, from the great correspondence of these temptations with the corrupt inclinations of our natures. For by reason of the nearness and sensibleness of those outward worldly goods, by which we are continually tempted and solicited to evil, they have the advantage of preengaging our affections to them, before we arrive to the use of our reason; for in our tender years these are the only goods that we can relish, they are these that do feed, clothe, and furnish us in hand with whatsoever our natural appetites do gape for; that are the sole entertainment of our childish fancies, and the only objects our yet unfledged thoughts and desires can reach at; and our youth being thus entirely inured to them, by that time we are grown up to the age of reason, and the capacities of virtue and religion, we have generally contracted such an excessive inclination towards them, and are so strongly biassed with the love of them, that, whensoever they beckon to us, we are ready to follow them through all the forbidden tracts that lead to everlasting ruin. For our natures being thus vitiated, the temptations without us have a strong party within us, a party of traitorous inclinations, which upon every summons solicits us to yield and surrender up our virtue and innocence; and no sooner can any temptation from without give the alarm, but presently our own lusts are up raising a mutiny within us, and with the heats of our corrupted fancy do many times so disorder our understanding, that it cannot rally up its considerations against them. For before ever our understanding could be furnished with considerations, our hearts were prepossessed

with such an excessive degree of ambitious, covetous, and luxurious inclinations, that when afterwards the pleasures, profits, and honours without begin to hold forth their grateful lures to us, and to tempt us away to fraud or treachery, to vanity or licentiousness, those depraved inclinations have gotten such head within us, that they prove most commonly too strong for all our consideration, and with their impetuous current carry us away, and drive us headlong down towards eternal ruin; and unless we put forth all the strength of our reason and resolution, and the grace of God also come in to our aid, it will be impossible for us to stem such a furious tide, when it is driven by the wind of an outward temptation. When therefore our own inclinations do so vigorously conspire with the temptations without, to thrust us on into sin and perdition, how can we be insensible of the eminent danger we are in of miscarrying for ever? But,

5thly, We are liable also to fall into a sinful state, and from thence into eternal misery, from the unwearied diligence and great subtilty of the Devil to make use of and apply these temptations to us. For that the Devil doth commonly, as an assistant genius to the corruption of our natures, excite and provoke men to wickedness, is very evident from scripture; where he is said *to work in the children of disobedience*, Eph. ii. 2. *to fill the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost*, Acts v. 3. and *to take away the word out of men's hearts, lest they should believe and be saved*, Luke viii. 12. All which expressions do plainly imply that the Devil is a constant agent in the sins of men. And being a spiritual agent, he must needs be supposed to have a

nearer access to the soul than any material cause whatsoever. For though he be totally debarred from all kind of intercourse with the immediate operations of the reasonable soul, and can no more look into the thoughts than we can into the bowels of the earth; yet he can easily get into the fancy, which stands next to that mysterious chamber that is open to no eye but God's, and make what use he pleases of the infinite images and phantasms that are in it, and dispose, and order, and distinguish them into the pictures of what objects he pleases: just as the painter doth his numerous colours that lie confusedly before him in their several shells, and continue and repeat those pictures and representations as long and as oft as he pleases. And then, considering what the natural use of the fancy is, both to the understanding and will, how it prompts the one with matter of invention, and supplies it with variety of objects to work on, and draws forth and excites the other to choose or reject those objects it presents, according as they are pleasing or displeasing; we must needs suppose that the Devil hath a vast advantage of insinuating his black suggestions into the soul, by having such free access into the fancy. And accordingly he is said to *put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ*, John xiii. 2. But then he being not only a spiritual, but also an intellectual agent, of a vast and capacious understanding by nature, and particularly improved in the black art of tempting by a long experience of its wiles and stratagems, having been a tempter almost ever since he hath been an angel; he must needs be supposed to be wonderfully expert and sagacious in it; that after having had five thousand years' experience of the methods of seducing

souls to increase and perfect his natural subtilty, he must by this be fully instructed when and how to apply himself to every age and constitution. For this hath been his sole business, wherein he hath been infinitely intent and active ever since he became a devil; and if from a man, then much more from a devil of one business. Good Lord, deliver me from a devil, that for five thousand years hath been continually making experiments of temptation, and drawing them into rules to direct and order his mischievous practice on the souls of men! But besides, as the Devil is of a spiritual and intelligent nature, so he hath a vast number of his black angels continually roving about the world, to seduce and captivate us into sin and ruin. And though these malignant spirits have no ligament of natural love between them, to tie and oblige them to one another, yet by that perfect hatred which they all bear to God and men, they are united together in an inviolable league, and go hand in hand with one another, in pursuance of their desperate design to involve our wretched souls in the same eternal ruin with themselves; which renders their force so much the more formidable. And when we have so many spiritual, subtle, and powerful adversaries combining against, and continually wandering to and fro like roaring lions to devour us, we cannot but apprehend our danger exceeding great; especially considering the infinite temptations from without that this world affords, the great variety of sensual goods and evils which they have to object to our carnalized minds. For these mischievous spirits having so great insight into our tempers, and so great a choice of objects to suggest to our fancies, can never be at a loss how they

may nick us with a convenient temptation; and that which gives their temptations a vast advantage over us is, that we know not how to distinguish them from the motions of our own hearts: for could we see the Devil at our elbows, or hear him whispering at our ears, every time he insinuates his wicked suggestions into our minds, we should doubtless reject them with an unspeakable horror; but because when they are conveyed into us, we know not how to distinguish them from the natural births of our own minds; therefore we do make no scruple to hug and dandle them in our thoughts, and entertain them with an actual complaisance. And when the Devil can convey his poison into us in such an invisible manner, without discovering his devil's face; when he can thus prompt us behind the curtain, and so disguise his whispers, that we cannot discern them from the secret lustings of our own hearts; how can we be safe, without great care and watchfulness, from the malice of such a formidable enemy? But,

6thly, We are also liable to fall into a sinful state, and from thence into eternal misery, from the plausible pretences we are furnished with to excuse and justify our compliance with them. When by our own folly and the Devil's malice we are actually betrayed into any wilful sin, a speedy repentance would recover us immediately, and heal the wound as soon as it is made; but instead of that, we have a thousand plausible excuses to palliate and skin it over: but, alas! in the mean time it rots inwardly, and is festering apace into an incurable gangrene. For when our conscience begins to fly in our faces, we have no other way but either presently to repent of, or to ex-

cuse and cloke our wickedness; the latter of which is usually pitched on, as being both the most easy and the most agreeable with our corrupt inclinations. And indeed there are so many coverts which men have found out for their lusts, to shelter them from the persecutions of their consciences, that this way there are no men can be long to seek; for either they may blanch them over with an innocent name, and call their intemperances good-fellowship, their knaveries ingenious fetches, and their incontinencies tricks of wit; or else they may extenuate and mince them into peccadillos, and smoothe over their grossest rebellions with the softer name of human failings and infirmities; or else they may furnish themselves with some show of argument to vindicate their vices, and assert them lawful, as some of late have done in the case of fornication and uncleanness; or else they may set up for philosophical sinners, and quote texts out of their gospel, the Leviathan, against the eternal differences of good and evil. But if their consciences will not be put off with such poor pretences as these, there are religious pretences enough in the world to protect and give countenance to all their impieties; and they may either fly to the Romish doctrines of confession and penance, of venial sins, and of probable opinions, with any one of which they may easily reconcile their lusts and consciences: or if they chance to have an antipathy to the name of Roman catholic, they may furnish themselves with such doctrines out of some of our modern enthusiasts, as will be as favourable to their lusts as they need, or wish, or desire; that will consecrate their irregular passions into signs of grace, and dwindle their grossest crimes into the sports of God's people;

that will exalt a mechanic train of fancies and passions into a sincere conversion, and improve an hysterical fit into a spiritual experience. By these and such like ways may men easily excuse their vices to their consciences; and when they are furnished with so many expedients, whereby to enable themselves to sin on quietly, in how much danger are they of falling fast asleep in the midst of their guilts, and never waking again, till they flame out about their ears into everlasting burnings! For whereas this faculty of conscience was implanted within us by the Author of our natures, to be a guard to our innocence and a scourge to our lusts, the generality of men have invented so many tricks to shift and evade it, that it is become almost totally useless to them. And when they have thus disabled their consciences from defending them against the importunities of their lusts, in what unspeakable danger must they be, not only of falling into, but continuing in them, till they have utterly ruined and destroyed them!

7thly, and lastly, We are also liable to fall into a sinful state, and from thence into eternal misery, from the extreme difficulty, which this our compliance with those temptations brings us under, to reject and vanquish them for the future. For every new compliance with temptations to evil foments and enrages our evil inclinations, and when once these evil inclinations are by our customary compliances educated into sinful habits, it will be impossible for us, without a mighty assistance of divine grace, to vanquish and subdue them. So that as upon the former accounts we are in extreme danger of falling into sinful courses, upon this account we are in no less danger of continuing in them. For by complying with

this temptation, I shall very much disable myself from withstanding the next; and if I yield to that too, the third will find me much more ready and tractable; and so on, till at last the temptation grows first familiar, and then natural to me, and then it will be hard, and then harder, and then almost impossible to reject or deny it. And when things are reduced to this issue, that my sin is naturalized to me, and grown into an inveterate habit, the Lord have mercy upon me! for now I am in the suburbs of hell, but one remove from the state of the damned, and am so far gone in a confirmed state of impiety, that I have almost lost my liberty of returning; and unless I am speedily rescued by some miracle of grace, it is morally impossible I should ever escape. Thus as we go on from one degree of wickedness to another, we do as it were break down the bridge behind us, and do what in us lies to disappoint ourselves of all hopes of any future retreat. For every step forwards in our sinful progress renders our return more difficult; and when once we have proceeded into a custom and habit of sin, we shall find repentance so irksome to us, and so much against the grain of our nature, that it is a thousand to one but that the difficulty of it will utterly dishearten us from attempting it; and so, rather than take so much pains, as we must necessarily do in swimming against the impetuous stream of our natures, we shall tamely yield to it, and suffer ourselves to be borne down by it into the dead sea of endless misery. When therefore there are so many causes conspiring together to betray us into sinful courses, and when there are so many difficulties, when once we are in, to oppose and hinder our retreat, what eminent danger are we in

of falling into and persevering in sin to our everlasting ruin! And thus you see how extremely liable we are upon all these accounts to be lost for ever; that is, to plunge ourselves into all those endless miseries which the loss of our souls implies.

What then remains, but that being seriously affected with the sense of our danger, we presently awake out of our security, and, with the deepest concern for our immortal souls, cry out with St. Peter's auditors, *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?* Verily, when I reflect upon the strange unconcernedness of men about their future condition, I am tempted to think, either that they do not believe that they have an immortal soul in them, or that if they do, they believe it is impossible it should for ever miscarry. For how is it conceivable, that men, who in other matters are so solicitous when their interest is at stake, and exposed to the least hazard, should believe that they have souls in danger of perishing for ever, and yet take no more care or regard of them, but (like the forgetful mother, who, when her house was on fire, to save her goods forgot her child) lay out all their thoughts upon the little concerns of this frail and mortal life, and in the mean time forget their precious souls, and leave them perishing in the flames of perdition? O stupid creature! what art thou made of, that canst consider that thou hast an immortal soul surrounded with so many dangers of being lost for ever, and yet be no more concerned for its preservation! Methinks if thou hadst any sense in thee, having a prospect of such endless miseries before thee, the remotest possibility of falling into them should be enough to startle and awake thee; but when thou art so near the

brink of those miseries, and hast so many causes round about thee shoving thee forward, and thrusting thee headlong down into them, and yet be no more concerned at it, is such a prodigy of senseless stupidity, as heaven and earth may justly be astonished at. It is true, if the danger thou art in were such as is impossible to be evaded, it would then be the wisest course thou couldest take to concern thyself as little as may be about it; but rather to live merrily whilst thou mayest, and not antedate thy misery by thinking of the dismal futurity. But, God be praised, this is not our case; though our condition be dangerous, yet it is far from desperate; for if we will use our honest endeavour, and vigorously exert the faculties of our nature, we not only may, but shall escape. There are indeed a great many causes of our danger, a great many enemies concurring to our ruin; but none of these are able to effect it, unless we ourselves join hands in the fatal conspiracy: if we will be but faithful friends to ourselves, and true to our own eternal interest, it will be beyond the power of all those causes together to do us any material injury. For, blessed be the good God, those that are for us are far greater and mightier than those that are against us; against us we have the world, the flesh, and the Devil, the weakest of which is, I confess, a dangerous and puissant enemy; but for us we have God, and angels, and our own reason, assisted with the most invincible motives; with vast and glorious promises, that stand beckoning to us with crowns of immortality in their hands, to call us off from the pursuit of our lusts to the practice of virtue and religion; with direful threatenings, that are continually alarming and warning us of the dreadful

consequents of our sins; and sundry other such mighty (I had almost said almighty) motives, as, if we would seriously attend to, would certainly render our souls impregnable against all the temptations of vice. And besides our reason thus armed and accoutered, we have on our side the holy angels of God, who are always ready to prompt us to and assist us in our duty, and to second us in all our spiritual combats against the enemies of our souls. And besides all these, we have with us the almighty Spirit of God, who, upon our sincere desires and honest endeavours, is engaged to aid us, and cooperate with us in working out our salvation; whose grace is abundantly sufficient for us, to strengthen us in our weakness, to support us under our greatest difficulties, and carry us on victoriously through the most violent temptations. And being backed with such mighty auxiliaries, how is it possible that we should miscarry, unless we are resolved to betray ourselves, and give fire to the fatal trains of our enemies; and if we are so bent, there is no remedy for our obstinacy, and it is just and fit we should be left to the dismal and pitiless effect of our own folly and madness. For if when we see ourselves in so much danger, and it is yet in our power to escape if we please, we will notwithstanding precipitate ourselves into ruin, all the world must agree, upon an impartial inquisition for the blood of our souls, that we murdered ourselves, that God is just, and that his hands are clean from any stain of our blood, and that our own ruin is wholly owing to our own invincible obstinacy.

III. I proceed now to the third proposition, that our renouncing of Christ and his religion will most

certainly infer the loss of our souls. For, as I have shewed you, these words are urged by our Saviour as a motive to deter his disciples from forsaking him, as is plain from ver. 24, 25. which necessarily supposes, that upon their forsaking him this loss would most certainly and inevitably follow. In the prosecution therefore of this argument, I shall endeavour these two things:

1. To shew you what that forsaking of Christ is which infers this loss.

2. Upon what accounts our thus forsaking him infers it.

1. What that forsaking of Christ is which infers this loss. To which I answer, there is a fourfold forsaking of Christ, which the scripture takes notice of as capital and damnable to the souls of men.

1st, When we forsake him by a total apostasy.

2dly, When we cowardly renounce the profession of his doctrine, or any part of it, notwithstanding we still believe and are convinced of the truth of it.

3dly, When by obstinate heresy we either add to or subtract from the faith of Christ.

4thly, When by any wilful course of disobedience we do virtually renounce the authority of his laws.

1. We lose and forfeit our souls, when we forsake Christ by a total apostasy from him: when, after we have been baptized into his name, and thereby have made a visible profession of our believing his doctrines and obeying his laws, we turn renegadoes, and cast off our belief of the one, and disown our obligation to the other, we do most justly incur the loss and forfeiture of our souls. For so strong and cogent is the evidence of Christianity, that it is not to be supposed that any professed Christian can be

either innocently or excusably seduced into a disbelief of it: for religion being a matter of the vastest moment and concern, he is a traitor to himself that either takes up his religion without examination, or that upon examination refuses to be swayed by the strongest reason; and I am sure it is impossible for any Christian to turn infidel, that is but so honest to himself as first to examine carefully the reasons of his faith, and then to resolve sincerely not to reject it, till better reasons appear to the contrary: but if, either through their wilful ignorance of the evidence of Christianity, or vicious prejudice against the purity of it, they suffer themselves to be seduced into apostasy, they are false traitors to themselves, and as such are justly liable to all those eternal damages they expose themselves to. And hence it is said of those that draw back, that is, apostatize from Christianity, not only that God's soul shall have *no pleasure in them*, but also that they *draw back to perdition*, Heb. x. 38, 39. And 2 Peter ii. 20, 21. it is said of those apostates, that *their latter end is worse than the beginning*; and that *it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment:* which implies that apostates from Christianity do not only forfeit their souls, but that without repentance they will be for ever forfeited to the most wretched condition, even to the nethermost degree of perdition.

2dly, We lose our souls, when, notwithstanding we do still believe and are convinced of the truth of Christ's doctrine, we do cowardly renounce the profession of it, or any part of it. For when once we have received the faith of Christ, we are thereby

obliged not to renounce the profession of it, whatsoever hazard it may expose us to, our blessed Lord having assured us, that if we *deny him before men, he will also deny us before his Father which is in heaven*, Matt. x. 33. And St. Paul also having warned us, *that if we deny Christ, he will also deny us*, 2 Tim. ii. 12. that is, that he will reject and abandon us before God and angels to everlasting misery and damnation; for so St. John assures us, Rev. ii. 8. that *the fearful and unbelieving*, i. e. the fainthearted cowards that for fear of persecution renounce the profession of the gospel, *shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*. Not that in times of persecution we are always bound to make an actual profession and publication of our faith, to run to the tribunals of our persecutors before we are sent for, and accuse ourselves of those doctrines for which we are persecuted; but whenever we are apprehended, accused, and examined by them, either upon knowledge or suspicion, we are bound, under the penalty of forfeiting our souls, to own and confess our faith, and not to deny any doctrine or article of it, whatsoever the consequence may be. For in this case, to deny our belief is not only a wilful lie, which is in itself a damnable crime, but an act of high treason against our Lord and Saviour; for by renouncing any doctrine which he hath revealed and committed to us, we do not only betray his trust, but blaspheme his veracity; to deny what we believe he hath revealed being in effect to declare him a cheat and an impostor. And having thus incurred the guilt of so black a treason against our Saviour, and wilfully persisting in it, what can we expect the consequence

of it should be, but the eternal loss and perdition of our souls?

3dly, We forsake Christ to the loss and forfeiture of our souls, when by obstinate heresy we add to or subtract from that heavenly doctrine which he hath revealed to us. By heresy, I do not mean barely a false opinion in our religion, whether it be of greater or lesser moment; for I doubt not but the same error may be an innocent mistake in one man, and a damnable heresy in another; that in the one it may be the effect of a weak understanding, but in the other of a perverse and obstinate will; and when the understanding misleads the will, it is weakness, but when the will misleads the understanding, it is wickedness. For simple error is only a defect of understanding, which in a fallible creature is every whit as inculpable as sickness in a mortal one; but heresy is a fault of the will, which is the only subject of virtue and vice. When therefore by the wicked prejudice of our corrupt wills against the purity of Christianity, our understanding is betrayed into loose and erroneous principles; when we understand by our vicious affections, and adapt our opinions to the interests of our lusts; when we believe for the sake of any darling vice, and suffer our own factious, covetous, and extravagant passions either to tempt us to profess those erroneous opinions which we do not believe, or to prejudice us into a belief of them; then is our error no longer to be attributed to the weakness of our understanding, but to the wickedness of our wills, which improves our error into a damnable heresy. For he would be a wicked man, though he were not an heretic, that harbours those sinful lusts which betrayed him into heresy; but by

being an heretic he is much more wicked, because now he is wicked under a pretence of religion, and cloaks his impieties with the garments of righteousness. And what greater profaneness can any man be guilty of, than to make his religion a bawd to procure for his lusts? So that if out of a vicious propension of will we obstinately persist in any religious errors, we are not only guilty of that wicked propension which is of itself sufficient to ruin our souls, but we are also accountable for vitiating our religion with those erroneous mixtures by which we have rendered it a shelter and protection to our lust. And what the consequence of this will be, St. Jude will inform us, who, speaking of certain heretics, who to gratify their own wicked inclinations had sophisticated Christianity with sundry black and poisonous principles, pronounces this fearful doom on them; *for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, verse 13.

4thly and lastly, We forsake Christ to the loss and forfeiture of our souls, when by any wilful course of disobedience we do virtually renounce the authority of his laws. For whilst we continue in any course of wilful sin, we live in an open rebellion to our Saviour, and do by our actions declare that *we will not have him to reign over us*. And accordingly, Titus i. 16. the abominable and disobedient are said to *deny God in their works*, even while they profess *to know him*; and what the fate of such will be, St. Paul hath forewarned us, Rom. ii. 8, 9. *But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew*

first, and also of the Gentile. And the same apostle, speaking of these obstinate rebels, who live and persist in an open defiance to our Saviour's authority, tells us, that *they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,* 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. But before we dismiss this argument, it will be requisite more particularly to explain what those wilful courses of sin are by which they thus renounce him; all which may be reduced to these three heads. First, We renounce the authority of his laws, when we sin against him out of wilful ignorance of them. Secondly, When we sin on against him out of wilful inconsideration of our obligation to them. Thirdly, When we persist in our sin against knowledge and consideration.

1st, We virtually renounce the authority of our Saviour, when we sin on against him out of wilful ignorance of his laws. For the laws of our Saviour, in which the great lines of our duty are described, are so plain and legible, that no man can be long excusably ignorant of them. But if our ignorance proceed either, first, from a profane and profligate mind, that is altogether regardless of God, and hath utterly worn off its natural sense of religion, and so neither heeds it nor concerns itself about it, but is become quite deaf to all the means of instruction; or if it proceed, secondly, from the vicious prejudice of our wills, and we industriously set ourselves, for the sake of some darling lust, to exclude from our minds all the means of conviction; and either studiously to avoid all thoughts of religion, that we may sin on without disturbance, which is the way of those that are openly profane and irreligious; or to use all possible arts to wheedle our understandings into

the belief of such principles as are most indulgent to our lusts, which is the way of hypocrites and false pretenders to religion: if, I say, our ignorance of Christ's laws proceeds from either of these causes, it will no more excuse our falling into sin, than the want of light will a man's falling into a ditch that shuts his eyes at noon, and winks on purpose, lest he should see and escape the danger that is before him. But then,

2dly, We virtually renounce the authority of our Saviour, when we sin on against him out of a wilful inconsideration of our obligations to obey him. For we, being reasonable creatures, are bound by the very constitution of our natures to act considerately, especially in matters of religion, which are of the greatest moment and importance to us; so that if we miscarry herein through wilful inconsideration, we are every whit as inexcusable as if we had considerately betrayed ourselves. Now wilful inconsideration is either actual or habitual; actual is either, first, when, notwithstanding we have been sufficiently warned by precedent surprises, we take no care for the future; for though it cannot be expected we should always keep so strict a guard upon ourselves as never to be surprised by an enemy; yet when we have been overtaken, there is all the reason in the world we should take warning by it, and grow more wary and vigilant for the future, that we should awaken in our minds such considerations as are necessary to prevent our being surprised again; which if we do not, our next surprise will be inexcusable: and if the sense of the lapse which was perhaps but an innocent error, or at most but a sin of infirmity, doth not make us more careful of

ourselves for the future, the next will be a wilful fall. Or else, in the second place, this actual wilful inconsideration is, when upon the presenting of any beloved temptation we either quench the good motions of our minds, and refuse to consider the evil and danger of the sin we are tempted to, lest we should be thereby deterred from committing it; or purposely contrive to baffle our own consideration by opposing it either with some ungrounded hope of impunity, or some fallacious promise of future amendment: and if to make way for our sin we do either of these ways wilfully drive all good thoughts from our minds, lest they should disturb and interrupt us in the enjoyment of it, our inconsideration is to be resolved into the wickedness of our wills, and not into the weakness and infirmity of our natures. And he that will not consider because he will sin, and afterwards extenuate his sin by his inconsideration, urges one sin in excuse for another, and makes that which is his fault his apology. Whensoever therefore we sin out of any actual and wilful inconsideration, we sin wilfully, and consequently do thereby virtually renounce the authority of our Saviour; the final event of which, without our repentance, will be our everlasting ruin and perdition. But then, besides this actual, there is also an habitual inconsideration, which is wilful; and that is, when by often stifling the convictions of our consciences, we have seared them into a deep insensibility of good and evil, so as that now we sin on without any remorse or reluctancy, and return to our lusts with the same indifferency as we do to our beds or our tables, without either considering what we are doing, or reflecting on what we have done: and this is so far from

palliating our sin, that it is one of the highest aggravations of it. For as it is no excuse that we sin out of an evil habit, which we voluntarily contracted by frequent acts of sin; so neither will it at all excuse us that we sin out of an habitual inconsideration, which we wilfully contracted by often refusing to consider. But as vicious habits have a proper evil and guiltiness in them, distinct from those vicious acts that produced them; so habitual inconsideration hath in it a peculiar venom of its own, beyond what was in those actual inconsiderations whereby it was acquired. And accordingly it is described in the scripture as the worst, the most desperate, and incurable state of a sinner; it is called a *reprobate mind*, Rom. i. 28, 29. *a seared conscience*, 1 Tim. iv. 2. *a hard and unrelenting heart, that treasureth up wrath against the day of wrath*, Rom. ii. 5. So that if we go on in sin without considering, with a mind habitually regardless and insensible, we are hardened and inveterate rebels, that have not only renounced the authority of our Saviour, but have also fortified ourselves, and that almost irreparably, against all his methods of conquering and subduing us. But then,

3dly, and lastly, We virtually renounce the authority of our Saviour, when we persist in our sin against knowledge and consideration. For to sin on obstinately against knowledge and consideration, argues an invincible malice of will; for though the condition of the ignorant and inconsiderate sinner be very sad and deplorable, yet there is much more hope of him, because he hath never yet had the force and efficacy of knowledge and consideration, which perhaps, if ever he be brought to experience, may

prove a successful means of his cure and reformation. But the knowing and considerate sinner hath tried and conquered the remedy, hath experimented the only means of his cure, and yet it grows worse and worse under the application; he knows what his sin is, and considers the consequence of it, and yet sins on, which argues a desperate resolution of will in him thus to run himself upon a foreseen ruin, and leap into hell with his eyes open. And what hope is there of dissuading him from his sin, that knows and considers the arguments against it, and every day breaks through them all at the call of every sinful temptation? And as his condition is most desperate, so his soul is most guilty and criminal; for every act of his sin is an open defiance to the authority of God and his Saviour; his rebellion is barefaced, and hath no manner of pretence wherein to mask or disguise itself; and he knows and owns himself to be in a rebellion, and yet perseveres in it, which extremely aggravates and enhances the guilt of it. For the sinfulness and immorality of actions is to be measured by the degrees of will that are in them, and the degrees of will in them are more or less, proportionably as the nature and evil of them is more or less known and considered: hence is that of St. James, iv. 17. *To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.* Had he not known the nature of his action, the weakness of his understanding would have excused the error of his will, and rendered it pardonable at least, if not altogether innocent: but when his understanding hath discharged its office, and shewed him the evil that he ought to avoid, that hath fairly acquitted itself, and can stand no longer chargeable for his miscarriages:

so that now the man chooses his own peril; and if he still choose what he ought to avoid, his understanding is clear, and his will alone is culpable. And when our rebellion against our Saviour is not only wilful, but the wilfulness of it is so extremely aggravated by our knowledge and consideration, what the consequence of it will be, that fearful passage will assure us, Luke xii. 47. *The servant that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* And thus I have endeavoured to represent to you what that forsaking of Christ is, which exposes us to the hazard of losing our souls.

2. I proceed in the next place to shew you upon what accounts it is that our forsaking of Christ infers this fearful loss; of which I shall briefly give you this fourfold account.

1st, Our thus forsaking of Christ infers the loss of our souls, as it is a most inexcusable contempt of the greatest mercy.

2dly, As it renders us the most unfitting objects of mercy for the future.

3dly, As it is an open violation of the fixed and stated condition of mercy.

4thly, As it is an utter rejection of our last remedy.

1. Our forsaking of Christ by any of the aforenamed instances infers the everlasting loss of our souls, as it is a most inexcusable contempt of the greatest mercy. For when the Son of God came down from heaven, he brought from thence with him the largest offers of mercy that heaven itself could make to a sinful world; he did not only bring down with him a grant of universal pardon and in-

demnity, under the broad seal of heaven, for every sinner that would lay down his arms and return to his allegiance, together with the most endearing invitations of the God of heaven to woo and win us to accept it; but he also brought along with him all that an everlasting heaven means, crowns of immortal glory and pleasure to encourage us to, and reward our acceptance of them. And what greater mercy could the God of heaven have expressed to us, than to send down his blessed Son, not only to tender to us an indemnity, but also to invite us to accept it with a promise of heaven? So that if now we reject him, now he is come to us with such vast and endearing proposals, what an intolerable slight will it be to the tender mercies of God! when we shall declare by our actions, that we will not exchange the sordid pleasures of our lust for the pardon of heaven, for the favour of God, and for all the hopes of a glorious immortality! How can we expect any farther relief from God's mercy, after we have put such an intolerable affront upon it, by preferring such an unworthy rival before it? When God hath laid his pardon, his love, and his heaven in our way, to stop us in our sinful courses, what a barbarous indignity will it be to trample upon them all, and run over them into hell! With what face can we hope for any farther kindness from heaven, after we have treated its kindness with so much rudeness and contempt? Certainly, for sinful men to reject and run away from their Saviour, when he comes to them with so much kindness, when he courts them with such astonishing expressions of mercy, is a provocation sufficient to incense an infinite goodness, and turn the tenderest mercy into an

implacable fury. And when infinite love is so infinitely provoked, what less expiation can it claim and exact, than the everlasting ruin and perdition of our souls?

2dly, Our forsaking of Christ infers the everlasting loss of our souls, as it renders us the most incapable objects of mercy for the future. For when we are arrived to that height of wickedness as finally to reject Christ and the mercies of his gospel, there is no farther mercy that we are capable of: if after this God should be so kind and indulgent as to pardon us, alas! what would it signify? for we should still be wretched and miserable, in despite of his pardon; and that wicked temper of mind which made us reject our Saviour would be an everlasting hell to us, though it should indemnify us. What will a pardon avail a man that is dying of the stone or strangury? He can but die, if he be not pardoned, and die he must, though he be. And as little advantage it would be to a wicked soul to be pardoned and absolved by God, while she hath a disease within her that preys upon her vitals, and hastens her to a certain ruin. She could have been but miserable in the future life, if she had not been pardoned, and miserable she must be, if she continues wicked, whether she be pardoned or no; there being an everlasting hell in the very nature of wickedness, which no outward act of pardon can quench or extinguish. Nay, if after our rejecting Christ and the mercies of the gospel, God should not only pardon, but admit us into heaven, and indulge us the free enjoyment of all its pleasures and felicities, yet that vicious temper of mind which finally seduced us from our Saviour would render us for ever incapable of re-

lishing the joys of it. Those rivers of heavenly pleasure would never agree with the hellish temper of our minds, which, like a feverish tongue, would utterly disgust their delicious streams by reason of its own overflowing gall. So that after we have finally rejected our Saviour, we are neither capable of being indemnified from hell, nor of enjoying heaven; and having cast ourselves beyond the reach of all mercy, into a state wherein we can neither begin to be happy nor cease to be miserable, our case is desperate, and there is no remedy but our souls must be lost and undone for ever.

3dly, Our forsaking of Christ infers the everlasting loss of our souls, as it is an open violation of the fixed and stated condition of mercy. The fixed and immoveable condition of the mercy of the gospel is, that we should constantly adhere to our Saviour by a true faith and a sincere obedience; and that whenever we fall off from him, either into infidelity, or heresy, or disobedience, we should remember from whence we are fallen, and return again to him by a deep and serious repentance. And indeed this condition is so low and condescending, that it was impossible for the wise God and Governor of the world to propose his mercy to us at a lower or easier rate; and if God should have asked our consent upon what conditions he should propose to us the mercies of his gospel, this would have been the utmost favour that we could in modesty have craved of him, that he would be so gracious as to accept our unfeigned faith and sincere obedience; and that whenever we fall off either from the one or the other, he would admit us to repentance, and receive us again upon our return and amendment. And should he have

proposed his mercy to us upon lower terms, he must of necessity have let go the reins of his government, and given us a free toleration for all manner of wickedness. Had the condition of his mercy been but one step lower than repentance, it had totally dissolved the obligation of his laws, and reduced the human world into a perfect anarchy. For should he have prostituted his mercy to impenitent sinners, he must have made it a refuge for obstinate rebels to fly to, and shelter themselves from the reach of his authority; and how inconsistent would this have been with the wisdom of his government! This therefore being the lowest condition upon which the wise and holy God can propose his mercy to us, there is no ground to hope that after we have rejected this, and are finally fallen off from it, he will make any new proposal to us. For he hath yielded as much already to the weakness and inconstancy of our natures, as he could possibly do with safety to his government; and if this will not suffice, we may depend upon it that he will rather consent to sacrifice our souls to his righteous vengeance, than his own authority to our obstinate wills. So that when once we have finally rejected our Saviour, and shaken hands for ever with faith and obedience, and repentance too, we are quite beyond the reach of any wise mercy; and then how deplorable must our condition be, when things are reduced to this desperate issue, that God must either consent to be foolishly merciful to us, or to abandon our souls to everlasting perdition!

4thly and lastly, Our forsaking of Christ infers the everlasting loss of our souls, as it is an utter rejection of our last remedy. For the last remedy which God

hath prepared for mankind to heal the malignity of their natures, and recover them from eternal misery, is the meritorious death and sacrifice of his blessed Son, who voluntarily undertaking to be the attorney-general, and common representative of sinful men, suffered death in our stead as a vicarious mulct and punishment for our sins; upon which the most merciful Father hath granted to all believing and truly penitent sinners a general indemnity from eternal punishments, to which they were bound over by their sins and rebellions; by virtue of which grant, as soon as we believe in Christ, and do thereupon sincerely repent of our sins, we are totally absolved from those everlasting punishments whereunto they have exposed and obliged us. And this sacrifice of Christ being the last remedy which God hath provided for our guilt, and the grant of pardon God hath made in consideration of it, being confined to believing and penitent sinners, it hence necessarily follows, that they who finally persist in unbelief or impenitency, do thereby for ever cut themselves off from all interest in that sacrifice, and from all title to that pardon that is granted upon it, and consequently leave themselves for ever destitute of all hope of pardon and indemnity for the future. So that by renouncing Christ we do renounce his sacrifice, which is the last and only remedy we have to depend upon. Hence, Heb. x. 26. we are told that *if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin;* that is, if after we have been baptized and initiated into Christianity, we relapse into infidelity or wilful disobedience, we do thereby forfeit our interest in Christ's sacrifice; and when we have once

rejected our interest in that, there remains no other sacrifice for sin, i. e. no other sacrifice upon which God will pardon and indemnify us. So that now all that remains to us is that which follows in the next verse, viz. *a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* For when we have finally baffled our last and utmost remedy, the condition of our souls must needs be desperate and incurable. When by our obstinate unbelief or final impenitence we have outsinned the virtue of our Saviour's sacrifice, we are out of the reach and compass of God's pardon, and so consequently are sunk beyond all hopes of recovery into endless and irreversible damnation. For now that precious blood which, if we had believed and repented, would have *spoke better things for us than the blood of Abel,* will rise in judgment against us, and, like the blood of those souls that are under the altar, will charge and impeach, and be continually imprecating the vengeance of Heaven upon us. And when that which was prepared for the last and utmost remedy of our souls shall be converted into their bane, and that which was intended for their advocate shall become their accuser; when that vocal blood, and those speaking wounds, which pleaded for, shall plead against, and cry out instantly for judgment upon them, what can they henceforth expect but everlasting ruin and destruction?

What then remains, but that since our forsaking of Christ will so infallibly infer the ruin of our souls, we all return to, and cleave fast to our Saviour in our belief and obedience; that we, who are fallen off from him into a course of wilful sin and disobedience,

immediately return again by a deep and serious repentance. For the way in which we are walking leads directly to destruction; every step of it is a descent into hell, and next to the lowermost is the bottomless pit, and, for all we know, the very last step we took brought us to the brinks of the flaming abyss; and if it did, one step further will set us beyond all hope of recovery. For in our sinful progress we are wading forwards in a shelving pool, which the farther we go the deeper it is, and so deeper and deeper, till we come to the bottom of it; so that at every step we are in danger of going beyond our depth, and plunging ourselves into an irrecoverable ruin; for we know not how soon we may be snatched away in our iniquities; and if it should so happen, that after we have sinned this moment, we should die the next, this will determine our everlasting fate, and sink us into eternal misery.

Wherefore, as we tender the safety of our precious souls, let us speedily forsake this dangerous road in which perdition waylays, and hell gapes to devour us every step we go, and return unto our Lord, in whom our safety lies. As yet the opportunity of salvation is in our hands, but before to-morrow morning it may slip away from between our fingers, and vanish for ever, and we that are this day wallowing in our sins, may before the next be roaring in hell. So that while we defer and put off our repentance from day to day, we do as it were cast lots for our souls, and venture our everlasting hopes upon a contingency that is not in our power to dispose of. As yet the gate of mercy is open to us, and our blessed Lord stands ready with his arms outstretched to welcome and receive us; but, for all we know, if we enter

not presently, the gate may be shut within a few moments, and then, though we knock and cry till our hearts ache, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, we shall receive no other answer, but, *Depart from me, I know you not.* O good God! how are we besotted then, that rather than begin our repentance to-day, we will wilfully run the hazard of being eternally miserable before to-morrow morning! For if this should be the evening of our day of trial, as for all we know it may, our life and eternity depends upon what we are now doing; and therefore one would think it should highly concern us wisely to manage this last stake, the winning or losing whereof may prove our making or undoing. In pity therefore to our perishing souls, let us return to our Saviour before it be too late, before our feet stumble on the dark mountains, and we fall down into everlasting darkness. And being returned and reunited to him, let us have a care we do not revolt again; for if we draw back, we cancel our repentance, and forfeit all its blessed fruits and benefits; and unless we steadfastly persevere and hold out to the end, all the pains we have taken in our Christian course will be for ever lost, and the remembrance of it will only administer to our future misery. For how will it vex us in the other world, to consider the labour it cost us to take heaven by storm! how vigorously we strove to mount the scaling ladder! through how many difficulties we had forced our way to that height of virtue and religion we were arrived to, and then, when we were got as it were to the topmost rounds, and had laid our hands upon the battlements of heaven, just ready to leap in and take possession of all its joys, how basely we let go our hold, and so tum-

bled down from that stupendous height into the bottomless abyss of endless misery! Doubtless this consideration must necessarily sting our woful souls hereafter, and for ever enrage them against themselves. Wherefore, as we value the safety of our precious souls, let us, who by our wilful rebellions have gone astray, return, and constantly adhere to our blessed Saviour. Alas! where can we be happier than in his service, who imposeth nothing on us but what contributes to our welfare? Where can we be safer than in his arms, and under his protection, who hath the command and disposal of all events, and to whom all power is given in heaven and earth? Where can we be placed more to our own advantage than under his guidance and authority, who never permits any to serve him for nought, but hath engaged himself to recompense our labour with a crown of glory that fades not away? And is it not strange that after so many advantageous invitations we should need to be scared to our duty? that after our blessed Master hath enjoined us such a reasonable, gentle, and infinitely beneficial service, he should be forced to terrify us into it with the flames of hell?

IV. I proceed now to the fourth proposition, that when the soul is lost, it is lost irrecoverably; where the Greek word ἀντάλλαγμα, which we render *exchange*, is used in the same sense with ἐξίλασμα, which signifies a price of redemption, denoting that when once a man hath sold his soul to perdition, it is unredeemable, and that no price will be accepted for its ransom and deliverance; when a man's soul is in hell, under the wretched bondage of a damned spirit, how little soever he regards it now, he would

give all the world, if it were in his power, to be released again; but if he had a thousand worlds it will not do, his bondage being such as will admit no ransom. For these words of our Saviour seem to have been a common proverb of the age he lived in, and that derived from those words of the Devil in Job, *All that a man hath will he give for his life;* that is, when a man is dying, he would willingly part with all to redeem his life; but all will not do. Which proverb our Saviour adapts to his own argument, in which he proceeds from temporal to eternal life: If a man would give so much for his temporal life, what would he not give for his eternal one? But as our temporal life is not to be redeemed, so neither is our eternal one, when once it is lost; for when once our soul is lost or abandoned to the state of the damned, it is lost for ever, and there is no ἀντάλλαγμα, or ransom, that will be accepted of by God for its redemption thence. In the prosecution of which argument I shall endeavour these two things:

1. To shew you that if God be so determined, he may, without any injury either to his justice or goodness, detain lost souls in the bondage of hell for ever, and absolutely refuse to accept any ransom for them.

2. That he is actually determined so to do.

1. That if God be so determined, he may, without any injury either to his justice or goodness, detain lost souls in the bondage of hell for ever, without accepting any ransom for them. And this, I doubt not, will plainly appear upon the due consideration of these following propositions.

1st, That God, being the sovereign Being of the

world, hath an unalienable right to impose laws upon all other beings.

2dly, That having this right, he may justly enforce those laws with whatsoever penalties he sees necessary or convenient.

3dly, That when those laws he imposes are for the good of his subjects, it is not only justice but goodness in him to enforce them with the severest penalty.

4thly, That the penalty of eternal bondage under misery is the severest and most effectual way to enforce those beneficial laws, and oblige us to the observance of them.

5thly, That if God think good to enforce his laws with this penalty, he hath as much right to exact it when we disobey, as he had to threaten and impose it.

6thly, That his actual exacting of it can no more impeach his goodness, than his threatening and denouncing it.

1st, That God, being the sovereign Being of the world, hath an unalienable right to impose laws upon all other beings. For he being the greatest and most powerful Being, can himself be subject to no other law but only that of his own nature; and his power being infinite and unconfined, as well as his wisdom, justice, and goodness, doth sufficiently warrant him to do whatsoever is consistent with them. For to be sure a Being of infinite power and greatness can have no superior, but must be necessarily exalted above all other authorities by this incommunicable prerogative of his nature; and being raised above all authorities, he must have authority above all, and

his essential dominion having no other law to bound it, but only that of his own nature, he must necessarily have a right to command whatsoever is consistent with his wisdom, justice, and goodness. His will therefore being the infinite preeminence of his power and greatness supreme, all other wills are obliged to bow before, and prostrate themselves to its sovereign authority; and there is no law whatsoever but he may justly impose upon them, provided it be not repugnant to that supreme law that is founded in his own nature. This therefore being premised, that God hath a right, as he is the sovereign Being, to give laws to all other beings; it hence follows,

2dly, That he may justly enforce those laws with whatsoever penalties he sees necessary or convenient. For laws without penalties are rather petitions than commands; and unless they carry force enough with them to overawe the subject, and make themselves obeyed, they want the formal sanction and obligation of a law. To have a power therefore of imposing penalties must necessarily be inseparable from the power of making laws, because they are the penalties that make the laws to oblige, that give them power to command, and enforce them with an awful authority. And as the power of giving laws supposes the power of imposing penalties, so it supposes a power of imposing such penalties as may be sufficient to incline and awe the subject into obedience, against all reasons to the contrary. For unless the penalty be great enough to outweigh all other considerations, the law which it enforces will be extremely defective in point of obligation, and leave the subject as much reason to disobey as to obey. God therefore, being by his own natural right the supreme Lawgiver of

the world, must be supposed to have an equal right of enforcing his laws with such penalties as in his own infinite wisdom he shall think necessary to oblige his creatures to obey him; and there is no penalty can be too rigorous or severe which is necessary to enable his laws to oblige and command us. Wherefore, according as he sees his subjects more or less tempted or inclined to disobey him, so will he need greater or less penalties to oblige us to obedience; and therefore foreseeing what a strong propensity to evil there would be in our nature, and with what importunate temptations this would be excited and wrought upon, he could not but foresee that the severest penalties would be necessary to back and enforce his laws, and, being necessary for that end, he must needs have a right to impose them, how severe soever they might be; nor is this severity less good than it is just; considering,

3dly, That when those laws he imposes are for the good of his subjects, it is not only an act of justice in him to impose them with the severest penalties, but of goodness. And this is really the case as to those laws which God hath imposed upon us; for the matter of them all is something tending to our good, something or other that is perfective of our natures, and conducive to our happiness; and being so, the greater the penalty is which they are backed and enforced with, the greater demonstration it is of God's care and zeal for our happiness. For the end of penalty is to oblige us to obedience, and when all obedience is for our good, the more strictly he obliges us to it, the more he befriends us. When a distracted man is endeavouring to mischief and destroy himself, it is kindness to bind him, though it be

with chains of iron. When therefore God found us so prone to injure ourselves by wicked and mischievous actions, it was mercy to bind our hands with his threatenings of punishment; and the stronger his bands are, the more they express his kindness, because the more they oblige us to be kind to ourselves, and true to our own interest. And certainly for God to lay us under the strongest obligations to be happy, is so far from being a blemish to his goodness, that it is a most glorious expression of it; but if we will be so obstinate as to run into the mouth of those threatenings which he hath levelled against us to scare us into happiness, it is just with him to discharge them upon us, and make us feel the effects of our folly and madness. Since therefore the reason of the penalty wherewith God hath enforced his laws is to oblige us to be happy, and since the greater it is, the more force it must have to oblige us, it hence necessarily follows, that though it be not only a great but an eternal one, yet it is not at all inconsistent with his goodness; especially if we consider,

4thly, That the penalty of eternal misery, as it is the severest, so it is the most effectual to enforce those beneficial laws which God hath imposed on us, and to oblige us to the observance of them. For to deter us from sin, who are so vehemently prone to it, it was very requisite that the penalty denounced against it should not only be great as to the degree, but endless also as to the duration of it; that so it might cut us off from all pretence of presumption, and leave us no ground of encouragement to be wicked. For we are exceeding apt to slight and undervalue those evils which are proposed to deter us from the goods which we vehemently desire, espe-

cially when these goods are present and sensible, and those evils future and invisible. For thus we conclude; The good that is before us we may enjoy a great while, and, which is very considerable, we may presently enter upon the possession of it; but as for the evil that is consequent to it, it may be a long while before it befalls us; and when it doth, there is this comfort, that it will at last have an end; and therefore, let what will follow, let us ever seize the present good, and make the best use we can of it; and as for the future evil, whenever it happens, the prospect of its end, though it be never so remote, will enable us to bear it more cheerfully. For ten years' present pleasure, vehemently desired, will far more effectually persuade us than a future misery of double the duration; and therefore, if the future penalty denounced against our sin were finite and temporary, it would not be sufficient to balance those present pleasures with which we are continually importuned and solicited; for the penalty being proposed to deter us from pleasures which we dearly love, we are upon that account inclined to make as light of it as may be, and to flatter ourselves with the softest and easiest representations of it; so that to be sure, if there were any one comfortable circumstance in it, our thoughts would presently insist upon that, and urge it as a reason why we should not be afraid of it. So that if the penalty of our sin had in it but the circumstance of being finite, to be sure, whenever it controlled our vicious desires, we should still make this a pretence to despise it; Well, let it be never so terrible, it will have an end. Wherefore, to enable it to terrify us effectually, it was requisite that it should not only be great, but endless; that, it

being stripped of all tolerable circumstances, we might be able to find nothing in it to qualify the terror of it. But now it being not only great but eternal, the threat of it, which, like a cloud, hangs lowering over us, hath no bright side to divert our thoughts from the blackness and horror of it; so that whenever we think of it, and weigh it in the balance with our sins, we must resolve to forsake them, or choose to be desperate. Since therefore an eternal penalty was so necessary to enforce God's law, and since his law is for our good, it is plain that his so enforcing it can blemish neither his justice nor goodness. Wherefore, though we should smart for ever for our disobedience hereafter, we can have no just reason to complain of God; especially considering,

5thly, That if God shall think good to enforce his law with such an eternal penalty, he must be supposed to have as much right to exact it upon our disobedience, as he had to threaten and impose it. For as supremacy over all other beings gives a right to make laws, and enforce them with threatenings of punishment; so when he hath actually imposed laws upon us, our disobedience to them gives a right to inflict on us the punishments which he threatened when he imposed them. For in all legal punishments the right of threatening them is founded on the power of the sovereign, but the right of executing them in the disobedience of the subject; and if the penalty be such, as that upon the subject's disobedience the sovereign cannot justly execute it, it was unjust for him to threaten it; for to threaten legally, is to claim a right to punish upon condition the law be broken and violated; and that sovereign, who, upon condition of the subject's disobedience,

claims a right to more punishment than he can justly exact of him when he disobeys, pretends to more right than he really hath, and so by consequence his claim is unrighteous. If therefore by the threat of his law God may justly claim a right to punish us for ever if we disobey, then doubtless when we have actually disobeyed, he may as justly exact it, and doth no more exceed his right when he inflicts what he threatened, than he did when he threatened to inflict it. If he had right to say, "I "will punish you for ever upon condition you trans-"gress my laws," then upon our performing that condition, he must necessarily have right to do as he said. So that our transgressing his law, being a sufficient condition for him to found a rightful claim to punish us eternally, by our doing this condition we justly forfeit ourselves to eternal punishment, and by our own act and deed voluntarily resign up our precious souls to the just lash of an everlasting vengeance; which as the justice of God is no way obliged to suspend, so neither is his goodness, which now is our only reserve; considering,

6thly and lastly, That God's exacting this eternal penalty of us, can no more impeach his goodness than his threatening and denouncing it. That it is highly consistent with his goodness to threaten it, I have already proved; but if it were not also consistent therewith to inflict it, to be sure his own wisdom would never admit him to threaten it. For to what end should he threaten to act contrary to the goodness of his nature? Either he must design to make us believe that he intends to act, or not; if the first, he must thereby design to abuse and misrepresent himself in the opinion of his creatures, to blemish the

reputation, and expose the honour of his own infinite goodness. But if he did not design to make us believe it, to what end should he threaten it? since unless we believe it, it can no more affect us than the firing of a gun that is charged with nothing but powder, and was designed to make a noise only, but to do no execution. So that if it be repugnant to God's goodness to execute this penalty, it must be repugnant to his wisdom to denounce it; but it being not only consistent with, but an expression of his goodness to denounce it, when he designs thereby to oblige us more firmly to our duty, in which our everlasting happiness is included, it may be no less an expression of the same goodness to execute it upon us, when we by our obstinate persistance in sin have rendered ourselves incapable of mercy. For now there being no more good to be done upon us, it will be an act of goodness in God to punish us for ever, if thereby any good may be done to others by us; if by making us everlasting monuments of his just indignation, he can everlastingly warn and secure others from those desperate courses that ruined us. For in this case his punishing us for ever may be an effectual means to do that good to others which he intended to do to us, by threatening to punish us for ever, and they may take warning by our punishment, though we would take none by his threatening. And when by being obstinately deaf to the threat of eternal perdition, which God denounced on purpose to oblige us to be happy, we have not only forfeited ourselves to it, but have also sinned ourselves into an incapacity of having any good done upon us; the only use which the divine goodness can make of us for the future, is to

do good to others by us, which it can no otherwise do, but by making our everlasting suffering an everlasting example for them to take warning by. For though there is no doubt but every virtuous soul shall be hereafter so confirmed in its state of beatitude, as that it shall never fall from it, yet shall it be confirmed no otherwise than by the force of those reasons and invincible motives which shall then continually urge, and immovably determine it unto that which is good: one of which reasons, as we may reasonably suppose, will be their prospect of the endless miseries of the damned, which will be an everlasting monitor to them, and together with their own sense of the ravishing pleasures of goodness, will secure them for ever from falling. For if the angels of heaven took warning by the fall and ruin of their apostate brethren, as doubtless they did, and thereupon became more immovably confirmed in innocence and goodness; why may we not as well suppose, that one of those reasons by which the spirits of just men are so immovably confirmed in their heavenly state, is the sad example of the endless miseries of the wicked? If therefore when God hath denounced eternal misery against us, on purpose to threaten us into happiness, we will take no warning, it is an act of goodness in him to inflict it upon us, since thereby he may so effectually contribute to the confirming of others in eternal happiness. For if we will not be wrought on by such a dreadful denunciation, there is no good can be done upon us; and when we are past recovery, and are forfeited by our own obstinacy into the hands of God's vengeance, it will be an act of goodness in him so to dispose of us as may be most for the good

of others, and consequently to dispose of us to eternal misery, and by so doing to make use of us as arguments to confirm and establish others in eternal happiness, that so our sufferings may be to them what his threatenings were to us, arguments to oblige us to be happy for ever. And so I have done with the first thing proposed, which was to shew you that if God be so determined, he may, without any injury either to his justice or goodness, retain lost souls in the bondage of hell for ever, and absolutely refuse to accept any ransom for them.

I now proceed to the second head of discourse, namely, to prove that God is actually determined so to do. And this I shall endeavour to demonstrate by these three reasons.

1. Because he hath already exacted a ransom for the souls of men, to which no other can be equivalent; from whence we may reasonably infer, that if this be rejected he will accept no other.

2. Because he hath expressly declared himself to be thus determined.

3. Because having thus declared himself, we must suppose that either he intended this declaration only for a scarecrow, or that he is determined to act accordingly.

1st, That God is determined to conclude lost souls under endless misery, and admit no ransom for them, appears from hence; because he hath already exacted a ransom for them to which no other can be equivalent; from whence we may reasonably infer, that if this be rejected he will accept no other. When by our first apostasy from God we stained the innocence of our natures, and forfeited our lives to the just vengeance of Heaven; so terribly was it then

incensed against us, that it would accept no meaner ransom for us than the precious blood of the Son of God; for so St. Peter tells us, *That we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. And though this ransom was of such a vast and incomparable value, that all the treasures in heaven and earth are insignificant trifles to it; yet was the virtue of it to extend no further than to those, who, by a lively faith and unfeigned repentance, returned from their rebellion to their duty and allegiance; which if we do not, but instead thereof obstinately persist in our wickedness and folly, we renounce all our part and interest in the blood of our Saviour; and do in effect declare, that upon such terms as those we will not be beholding to him for our ransom; but that rather than accept of redemption upon such ungrateful conditions, we will trust to the courtesy of the vengeance of God, and abide the most fatal effects of it. When therefore by persisting to the end in our unbelief and impenitence, we have finally rejected the blood of Christ, and utterly extinguished all our right and title to it, what pretence of reason have we to hope that God will ever accept of any other ransom for us? When to the sins, by which we made the first forfeiture of our souls, we have added the rank and horrid impiety of trampling on the blood of the Son of God, and so are not only not redeemed by it from the vengeance to come, but are a thousand times more deeply enthralled to it, by reason of that additional guilt we have contracted by squandering away the price of our redemption; with what face can we expect, in

the midst of such black circumstances, that God should accept of any exchange for our souls? He that would not release us from the obligation of our first guilts, upon any less consideration than the blood of his Son, what likelihood is there that any consideration should move him to release us after we have so prodigiously augmented our guilt by rejecting his blood, and finally renouncing all our interest in it? Doubtless he that demanded so vast a ransom for us when our guilt was so comparatively small and inconsiderable, will account no ransom sufficient when we have so transcendently enhanced and multiplied it. For if the blood of Christ, which is of such an unspeakable value, can give us no relief without our willing acceptance of it upon the terms it is proposed to us, then when we have finally refused it on those terms, it must be something that is more valuable than his blood that must relieve us; something that is sufficient not only to redeem us from those guilts which his blood was a ransom for, but also to expiate the guilt of our trampling on his blood, which is the greatest and blackest of all. But since the blood of Christ is incomparably the most precious ransom that heaven and earth could afford, what hope is there that when this is rejected by us God should accept any other in exchange for our souls?

2dly, That God is really determined to conclude lost souls under endless misery, and admit no ransom for them, appears also from hence, because he hath expressly declared himself to be so determined. For so our blessed Saviour, who was the great messenger of his will to the world, hath expressly told us, that the final sentence of the wicked shall be to *everlasting fire*, Matt. xxv. 41. and that the fate of obstinate

sinners, whom he compares to chaff, shall be to be *burned up with unquenchable fire.* But perhaps you may object, that these texts only prove the everlastingness of the fire in which they shall suffer, and not their everlasting suffering in it; for this fire perhaps may immediately consume, and utterly destroy them, and render them insensible of misery for ever. To which I answer, that the contrary is most evident; for they are expressly said to live in this fire, and to perform the functions of living beings in misery; *to weep and wail, and gnash their teeth,* Matt. xiii. 42; and in the parable of Dives, he is said to *lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments,* and to *see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom;* and *to cry out to Abraham, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame,* Luke xvi. 23, 24.—a plain evidence that this fire is to torment, and not to consume them. Well, but this, you will say, imports no more than their being tormented in hell for some period of time, after which, it may be, they may cease to be, and consequently to be miserable. To which I answer, that elsewhere it is expressly asserted, that this torture is to endure for ever; for *these,* saith our Saviour, speaking of the wicked, *shall go away into everlasting punishment,* Matt. xxv. 46. And how can their punishment be everlasting, unless we suppose them to subsist everlastingly in it? If you say, it is everlasting only as it is an everlasting destruction or privation of their being; I answer, that in other places of scripture it is expressly asserted, that this everlasting punishment is a positive thing; for it is said to be a *worm that never dieth,* Mark ix. 44. that is, that to

all eternity lives and preys upon the wretched sufferers; and more expressly yet, Rev. xx. 10. those that are *cast into the lake of fire and brimstone* are said to *be tormented* there *day and night for ever and ever:* where the Greek word βασανισθήσονται doth plainly denote positive torment, and referring peculiarly to a rack, denotes the kind of this positive torment to be such as is not designed to put an end to our lives, but to continue them with inexpressible pains. For this we know is the proper use and design of a rack; and accordingly, upon this tormenting rack of hellish punishment, they are said to have *no rest day nor night,* Rev. xiv. 11. So that the eternal misery of lost souls is as fully and expressly asserted in scripture, as it could well have been, had it been expressed with a design to leave no pretence of exception for gainsayers; and when a thing is as plainly asserted to be as it could well have been, if it really were, either we must suppose the thing to be, or else the assertion to be fallacious. So that if we think that God's own word doth truly signify his determination, we must from hence be forced to conclude, that he is really determined to shut up lost souls in eternal misery, and admit no ransom for them.

3dly and lastly, This also appears, because if, after he hath thus declared himself, there were any reason to think that he is not determined to act accordingly, that reason would warrant us to believe that this declaration was only intended for a scarecrow, and consequently to contemn and despise it. For against all that hath been said, it may be (and is by some men) objected, that God is not bound to do as he threatens; that when by our disobedience we have incurred the penalty he threatens, he hath

an undoubted right indeed to inflict it upon us, and consequently may, if he please, inflict it without any wrong or injustice; but then, if he please, he may dispense with it too, either in the whole or in part, as he sees convenient. For the punishment being only a debt which the sinner owes to him, he is no more obliged than other creditors are to exact the utmost farthing of it; but may exact or remit the whole, or abate what part soever he pleases; and therefore it is to be hoped, that he, being a merciful creditor, will not be so extreme and rigorous as to exact of us the utmost punishment we owe him; but that when he hath made us smart a while for our folly, he will either release us into a more happy condition, or put an end to our beings and miseries together. To which I might answer, that when by our sins we have forfeited ourselves to the just vengeance of God, it is infinite mercy and goodness to others, to punish us according to his threatening; and therefore when we by our sins have rendered ourselves incapable of his mercy, that mercy which now inclines him to do good to us, will then equally incline him to do good to others, by the dreadful example of our punishment; and so he may be a very merciful creditor, and notwithstanding exact of us the utmost farthing. But this I have already largely insisted on, and therefore, 2dly, I answer, That what God may do is not for us to determine, when he may or may not, and is obliged to neither; but when he hath expressly denounced what he will do, we can have no reason to hope that he will be better than his word. For if after that he hath denounced, that if we persist in our sin he will punish us for ever for it, he should have left us any just reason to hope that

he will not, he would thereby have countermined himself, and baffled the design of his own denunciation, which is to terrify his rebellious creatures from their sins, and to awe them into obedience to his laws. But how much reason soever he hath given me to hope that he will not be so severe to me as he threatens, so much reason he must have given me not to be afraid of his threatenings. If I had any just reason to believe that he will be more merciful than to inflict what he denounces, it is an irrational thing for me to dread his denunciations; for I know God will do as just reason directs, and therefore I must conclude either my reason to be false, or God's denunciation to be a scarecrow; for if there be any just reason why his mercy and goodness should interpose and avert the execution of his threats from me, I ought not to be afraid of them, because I am sure he can do nothing that his mercy and goodness forbids; but if there be no reason for such an interposure, I am unreasonably presumptuous to expect it. So that either my expectation must be groundless, or my fear of God's threatenings irrational: and can it be imagined that the wise God would ever go about to awe his creatures into obedience, by threatening their sin with such punishments as he knows they have just reason not to be afraid of? Whatsoever therefore God may do, I am sure, if we go on in our sins, we can have no reason to hope that he will either not punish us at all, or less than he hath threatened; or consequently, that he will abate us one moment of that eternal misery which he hath so plainly and expressly denounced against us. What then remains, but that since when our

soul is lost, it is lost for ever, we now take all possible care to secure it while we may?

V. I proceed now to the fifth and last proposition; that this irrecoverable loss of the soul is of such VAST and UNSPEAKABLE moment, that the gain of all the world is not sufficient to compensate it: *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* that is, It will not profit him at all; nay, it will be so far from that, that it will turn to his unspeakable loss and disadvantage: though by renouncing his profession of my doctrine, or his obedience of my laws, a man were sure to make himself lord of all the world, and to possess and enjoy it as long as he lived; yet, if for so doing he should afterwards lose his soul, as most certainly he will, he will find in the issue that he hath made a woful bargain of it, and be forced to acknowledge himself a vast loser, when he comes to suffer those intolerable damages which the loss of a soul implies. For the proof of which I shall run a comparison between the gain and the loss, and therein endeavour to represent to you how much the evil of this loss exceeds the good of that gain; and this I shall do in these following particulars:

1st, The good that is in the gain is imaginary and fantastical; but the evil that is in the loss is real and substantial.

2dly, The good that is in the gain is narrow and particular; but the evil that is in the loss is large and universal.

3dly, The good that is in the gain is convertible into evil; but the evil that is in the loss is never to be improved into good.

4thly, The good that is in the gain is mixed and sophisticated; but the evil that is in the loss is pure and unmingled.

5thly, The good that is in the gain is full of intermissions; but the evil that is in the loss is continual.

6thly, The good that is in the gain is short and transitory; but the evil that is in the loss is eternal.

1st, The good that is in the gain is imaginary and fantastical; but the evil that is in the loss is real and substantial. For whatsoever we gain of this world's goods beyond what is necessary to serve the real occasions and modest conveniences of this present life, administers to no other purpose but only to gratify an extravagant fancy: for all the real need that a man hath of these worldly goods is only to maintain and provide for his body; for his soul hath no more need of them, than an angel hath of money to buy victuals and clothes with: and one would think so small a thing as an human body is, could not need many things, and that a piece of animate matter, some six foot long, might be very easily and cheaply provided for: and indeed so it would be, if we could once forbear fancying its needs to be greater than they are; but if we let loose the reins to an ungoverned fancy, that will so extend its needs beyond the capacities of its nature, that all the world will be too little to content the extravagant appetites of this little clod of earth. Lay but your fancies aside, and you will want no other apparel but what is sufficient to keep you warm, and clean, and modest, and with this you may be very cheaply provided; but if you will resolve to humour that capri-

cious thing, you will want the revenue of a lordship to cover your nakedness. Keep but your fancies in order, and your appetites will be contented with plain and wholesome provisions; and this a small income will furnish you with: but if once you let loose that roving faculty, and suffer it to grow wanton and delicate, that will so stretch your appetites, that the stores of all the four elements will scarce be sufficient to gratify their luxuries. And so it is in all other things appertaining to the body; whose wants, according to nature's measures, are small, but according to fancy's, are infinite. So that if a man had all the world in his possession, yet all but that little, little part of it, that is either naturally necessary, or rationally convenient for his bodily subsistence, would be good for nothing but to humour the desires of an extravagant fancy, which are so far from being quenched, that they are but the more inflamed by enjoyment. If I had all the wealth of Crœsus, the good fortunes of Cæsar, and the dominions of Alexander, what would it advantage me? I should only have abundance of things that I have no real need of; things, that if I would myself, I might easily be as happy without as I can be with them. For would I but make my nature and my reason the measure of my wants, I might always live next door to satisfaction; and as for my wants, they would be so light and portable, that I might easily take them and carry them along with me, and lay them down almost wheresoever I pleased. Whereas if I permit my fancy to grow wild and imaginative, I shall always find my wants doubled with my enjoyments; and whereas when I had but five pounds, I needed but five hundred; when I have five hundred, I shall need

five thousand; and so on, till at last I need beyond all possibility of satisfaction. Since therefore all that this world can do for me, besides the supplying of a few modest needs, which a very little of it will do, what a miserable loser shall I be, if, merely to gratify my fancy, I forfeit my soul, and incur the real miseries of a woful eternity, in pursuit of the fantastic joys of a moment? If to purchase things which I shall never be the better for, which while I have not I do not need, and which when I have I shall not enjoy, I should not only squander away the most substantial happiness, but plunge myself into a vast abyss of real and intolerable miseries; O good God! what a woful bargain shall I have of it! For though the pleasure of our sin doth always vanish on the brink of fruition, and, like a golden dream, concludes in a disappointed expectation; yet the sting that is to follow it will produce in us not only a real, but an extremely sharp and dolorous perception; so extremely sharp, that it will pierce our very hearts, and cause us to roar out with anguish for ever. And, alas! what a poor compensation is it for a man that must ere long be enduring the tortures of a tedious famine, to be entertained a few moments with the picture of a feast, or the story of Cleopatra's banquet! or, what man in his wits would ever forfeit himself, for the mere fancy of a pleasure, to the lingering torments of a rack? And yet, O wretched sinner! thou actest a thousand times more extravagantly, who, by thy unlawful pursuits of the imaginary pleasures of this world, betrayest thy soul to the bitter torments of hell.

2dly, The good that is in the gain of this world is narrow and particular; but the evil that is in the

loss of a soul is large and universal. It is but a part of ourselves, and that the worst part too, that this world's goods can benefit and advantage; they can only clothe our bodies more splendidly, and feed them more deliciously, and furnish them with more plenty of outward accommodations; but, alas! for the soul, they are as insignificant to her as musical sounds are to the eye of the body, or magnificent shows to the ear: they cannot improve the meanest faculty about her, nor make her in any respect either the better or the wiser. And as for the body itself, wherein all their lines do centre, there are a thousand cases in which they are perfectly useless; for they cannot give health to it in any sickness, nor ease in any pain; they cannot recover a lost sense, nor restore a withered limb, nor rectify a deformed feature; nor is it in their power to reprieve it from the grave one moment beyond the natural period of its mortality. So extremely narrow are these worldly goods which we are so greedy of, that they can extend their benefits no farther than the body; nay, and even to that they are vastly inadequate, there being a thousand bodily necessities whereunto they cannot extend themselves. So that if to purchase these we expose ourselves to eternal perdition, we shall have in comparison but a drop of good to compensate ourselves for an ocean of misery. For the misery of hell is as vast and extensive as our capacity of suffering, and hath in it an appropriate torment for every sensible part of our natures. It racks the wretched soul in every faculty, and fills up all its capacities of misery with anguish and vexation: it afflicts its mind with horrid apprehensions, wounds and gashes its conscience with dismal reflections; it

festers its will with black and venomous passions, and starves its desires with everlasting famine. And as it leaves no part of the soul untormented, but covers it over from head to foot with *wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores*, so when the body at the resurrection is reunited to it, the misery of hell will extend to this also; for then it will have superadded to its spiritual plagues the most exquisite instrument of corporeal torment, viz. the dark, and noisome, and scorching flames of a burning world, which will seize upon the bodies of reprobate sinners, they being finally abandoned to them by the last and final sentence, and stick close to and burn through them for ever. And their bodies being thus wrapped and clothed in flaming sulphur, must needs be exquisitely vexed in every part and member, and feel as many torments as they have senses to endure them. Thus the miseries of hell, you see, are far more extensive than the goods of this world; for whereas these extend only to our bodies, and can relieve them but in a few of their necessities, those overspread both the body and soul, and are both coeternal and coequal with their utmost capacities of suffering: so that when by our unlawful pursuits of the goods of this world we forfeit ourselves to eternal perdition, we plunge our whole nature into intolerable misery for the ease and the pleasure of one particular part. Now would any man in his wits, do you think, eat ratsbane for no other reason but only because it is sweet? Would he to please his lickerish palate diffuse a tormenting poison over all his parts and members? or would he think the pleasure of one sweet gust a sufficient compensation for all the succeeding spasms and con-

vulsions? Surely no; none but a madman could ever admit of such an extravagance. And yet, O wretched sinner! thou art far more wild and extravagant; for a particular good, thou throwest thyself headlong into an universal misery; and to gratify thy body in a few little things, dost utterly ruin both thy body and soul. To please thyself in one part, thou punishest thyself in all; and for the gratifying one sense, derivest a tormenting venom over all the senses of thy nature; and so, in fine, wilt have nothing but the pleasure of a taste or a touch to compensate thee for all the agonies and torments that thy body and soul together are able to sustain. And what a poor compensation this is, I leave you to judge.

3dly, The good that is in the gain of this world is convertible into evil; but the evil that is in the loss of a soul is never to be improved into good. When we are arrived to the possession of those outward goods which at present we do so greedily grasp after, it is a very uncertain thing whether they will prove goods to us or no; whether, even as to this life, we shall be the better or the worse for them. For it is very often seen that these worldly goods prove the worst of plagues to those that are the owners of them, and that those things which we account the blessings of this life do prove the curses and miseries of it. When by a thousand lies, flatteries, and circumventions, a man hath raised himself up to that pinnacle of preferment which his ambition aspired to, how often hath that height proved the occasion of his fall, by exposing him to those storms of envy and misfortune which would have blown over his head, had he sat quietly below, and been

contented to enjoy himself in a more private fortune! and so when by an infinite number of rapines and oppressions, frauds and dishonest compliances, a man hath amassed together a vast deal of wealth, how often hath that proved the occasion of his undoing! sometimes by exposing him to the rapacious covetousness of others, but most commonly to the ill effects of his own extravagant luxuries. For usually when fraud is the procurer of wealth, wealth is the bawd of luxury; this being the best expedient to drown the cry of the guilt of our dishonesty. And then by that time luxury hath produced its natural effects, it commonly leaves the wealthy possessor in a far worse condition than poverty; it leaves him so racked with the gout or the stone, so overwhelmed with catarrhs or dropsies, that the miserable man would be heartily contented to part with all his wealth for ease, and to return to poverty, so he might but return to the health of an honest ploughman; whereas would he have contented himself with the honest acquest of a moderate fortune, he need have wanted nothing but temptations to luxury, and provisions for tormenting diseases. So that in short, whilst we are pursuing this world's goods, we know not what our game will be, till we have seized on it; peradventure, instead of venison, we are hunting a serpent, which, when we have caught, will sting and envenom us, and prove a plague, instead of a satisfaction. And is it not extravagant madness then for men to run themselves into all those miseries which everlasting ruin and perdition implies, for the sake of such uncertain goods, which when they are possessed of, for all they

know, may do them a thousand times more mischief than good? For as for those future miseries, which by our sinful pursuits of these present goods we incur, they are all such absolute and essential evils, that there is not one drop of good to be extracted out of them; for as they are eternal, they are of an unalterable nature, and the same insupportable plagues they were yesterday, they will continue to be to-day, and for ever. Indeed if we were to outlive them, they might be accidentally advantageous to us; they might discipline our natures for an happiness to come, and serve as so many toils to our future pleasures; and when they are past, the remembrance of them, like bitter sauce, might give a relish to our joys, and render them more grateful and delicious: but we being to endure them for ever, there is nothing good can succeed them, no possible advantage can be derived from them; for in miseries that have no end, there can be nothing but misery. And is it not very strange then that men should forfeit their souls to such unalterable miseries, for such goods as may be plagues to them? when for all they know there may be such a train of mischiefs at the heels of these pleasures, and profits, and honours they are so greedy of, as may outweigh all the good of them, and render them a dear pennyworth, though they had never pawned their souls for them. And if it so prove, as it is very probable it may, then their bargain is worse than if they had pawned their souls for nothing; because they have incurred one misery only to seize upon another, and have waded through a temporal to come at an eternal one.

4thly, The good that is in the gain of this world is mixed and sophisticated; but the evil that is in the loss of a soul is pure and unmingled. Should a man sell his soul for never so great a share of this world's goods, he would find he had gotten but a very uneasy purchase; a purchase as he can neither secure without a great deal of care, nor yet enjoy without a great deal of dissatisfaction. For what we call ours, is really ours but for our portion of expense and use; and all that is ours beyond this, is only the title and the care, and the trouble of securing and dispensing it: for let but your servants walk into your gardens of pleasure, and the air shall fan them with as gentle gales, the flowers delight them with as fragrant odours, and the birds entertain them with as ravishing melodies. And in some sense your meanest servants enjoy what you have with far more freedom than you; for your possessions are like a great harvest, which many labourers must bring in, and more must eat of, only you are the centre of all the cares, and you they fix on; but the profits run out to all the lines of your circle, who usually enjoy their several shares with much more peace and quiet than you. You take the pains to dig the well, and undergo the care of supplying and maintaining it; and when you have done, you can drink no more of it than the meanest slave about you; but what you drink cannot be so sweet and pure, because it is dashed with many more cares and disturbances. For considering the infinite hazards these worldly goods are exposed to, they must needs carry with them abundance of cares and disquietudes; so that when you are possessed of them, you only grasp a bundle of gilded thorns,

which while they please your eyes, will prick your hearts, and continually disease you in the enjoyment of them. And then for the enjoyment itself, considered abstractedly from those cares that surround it, alas! it is such as rather creates desire than satisfaction; for though at a distance these terrestrial goods do promise us fair, and raise in us vast and boundless hopes, yet still when we approach nearer to them, we find ourselves miserably deceived. And then our enjoyment falling so vastly short of our expectation, all those swelling hopes that flattered and tolled us on, fall flat immediately under the disappointments of fruition; and accordingly, our desires missing their promised satisfactions, grow more outrageous and violent. And thus our enjoyments, as they are compassed with vexations, so are they mingled with restless discontents, as being all too little for our vast desires, which are therefore rather enraged than satisfied with them. What infinite losers therefore must those men be, who, to compass those sophisticated goods which have so many evils intermixed with them, forfeit their souls to everlasting perdition! which is so vast and so intense an evil, as will admit no degree of good to be intermingled with it; a misery so pure and unallayed, as that it totally excludes all communication with happiness, and will not admit the least hope of ease or refreshment. For what ease can we hope for in the everlasting burnings? what refreshment can we expect in the unquenchable lake of fire and brimstone? Doubtless, we may as soon hope to find a cordial in the sting of a scorpion, or sprightly nectar in a nest of wasps, as one degree of ease or comfort in hell. There is not a gleam of light in all that region of

darkness, not a drop of sweet in all that vast ocean of gall and wormwood; but it is all misery, sharp and exquisite misery, without the least mixture of ease, or hope of mitigation. Can we then be so stupid as to imagine the enjoying this world's goods, which are all such compositions of good and evil, worth the enduring such pure and abstracted miseries for ever? Would you for the pleasure of an intemperate draught, that will quickly end in a qualm or an headach, be contented to endure the torment of being impaled? or provided you might spend this night in your lascivious enjoyment, which after a few moments will conclude in shame and remorse, would you be willing to roar upon the rack all the night after? Doubtless you would not. And yet, God knows, these pleasures are not comparably so disproportionate to those pains, as the pleasures of this world are to the pains of eternity. How then is it possible that such bitter-sweets as these are, sweets that are chequered with so many cares, and allayed with so many discontents and disappointments, should be sufficient to countervail those intolerable miseries which the loss of our souls implies!

5thly, The good that is in the gain of this world is full of intermissions; but the evil that is in the loss of a soul is continual. If I were lord of all the world, I should never be able to live in a constant enjoyment of it. For such wretched counterfeits are all the pleasures of sense, that they will not endure the test of a long fruition; for at the best they are but frolics of delight, that never seize us but when we are turned up to them in moods and fits; and all the complacences we have in them are nothing but

the little starts of our appetite, which, as soon as it hath done craving, grows aweary of them, and so enjoys and loathes them by turns; for they can dwell no longer upon the appetite than while the necessities of nature do continue; and every fresh morsel after the hunger is satisfied, is but a new labour to a tired digestion, and so, instead of being a pleasure, becomes an oppression. So that it is but a very little while that the pleasure of any outward enjoyment continues: for till it hath pleased us, it is not a pleasure; and when it hath, it ceases to be so: and so it dies as soon as it is born, and its nativity is only a prelude to its funeral. Thus all our enjoyments are stinted by our appetites, which are naturally incapable of a continued fruition. But then besides this, our enjoyments are liable to a thousand other interruptions, which are not in our power to prevent or avoid; for whether we will or no, we must be sometimes out of humour, and then all the pleasures in the world are most tedious impertinences; and sometimes we must sleep, and then we are insensible of them; and sometimes be sick, and then they are as tasteless as a cork; and sometimes be griped with guilty thoughts and ill-aboding reflections, and then, instead of pleasures, they are our horrors and vexations. Thus our enjoyment, like an ague, is full of intermissions; now we are pleased, and anon we are displeased, and immediately after the hot fit is over, the cold one returns: and thus it would be, if we had all the world in our possession. And indeed the intervals of our enjoyment of these terrestrial goods are usually longer than the enjoyment itself, and the hot fits of our pleasure and fruition are generally sooner over, than those cold ones of displeasure and

dissatisfaction that succeed them. So that if I could command all the goods in the world, they would be so far from yielding me a continued happiness, that in all probability the interruptions of my happiness would take up a greater part of my life than the enjoyment of it; and perhaps for every one moment of fruition, I should spend two either in pain or in non-perception of pleasure. How then is it possible that such a broken and discontinued happiness as this, should ever make us amends for those miseries that are included in the loss of our souls? For to lose our souls is to be miserable without any interruption, to be eternally grieved and tortured without any intervals of ease or refreshment. For the state of perdition is a continual torment spun out into an endless duration, wherein there are no days of rest, nor nights of sleep, nor intermediate pauses of ease; where the fire never ceases burning, nor the worm gnawing, but woe succeeds woe without intermission, and miseries, like the nimble minutes of time, follow miseries, and tread close upon one another's heels. Hence, Rev. xx. 10. those that are cast into this lake of perdition are said to be *tormented day and night for ever;* which plainly implies that their miseries are all but one uninterrupted torment, or continued succession of dolorous perceptions for ever. And if so, O blessed God! what a poor compensation for it are the broken joys of this world! For if the misery of hell were to last no longer than the happiness of this world, yet if for one week's happiness here I were to endure another week's misery there, I should have a miserable bargain of it; because the happiness being so interrupted, and the misery so continued, I must in the same space undergo at least double the misery

that I enjoyed happiness. And what man would be contented to live all the next week in a caldron of boiling oil, wherein he knows he shall be continually tormented, provided he may spend this week in an uninterrupted enjoyment of the most grateful luxuries, which he knows he must be as often and as long insensible as he can be sensible of?

6thly and lastly, The good that is in the gain of this world is fading and transitory; but the evil that is in the loss of the soul is eternal. For so impotent are all this world's goods, that they cannot ensure us of one moment's enjoyment of them. It may be, as soon as ever we have filled our bags and barns with the wages of iniquity, and have a plentiful provision for many years' ease and luxury, we may be snatched away upon the very brinks of enjoyment, and hurried into a woful eternity, there to consume those years in misery and torment, which we promised to spend in pleasure and voluptuousness. This you know was the case of the rich epicure in the gospel: how did the jolly wretch congratulate and applaud himself in the golden purchase of his frauds and oppressions! how did he vaunt of his own prudence and good conduct, and strut and swell with munificent conceits of the happy condition he was now arrived to, when all of a sudden his unprepared soul was surprised with a summons to eternity! And then how blank did the fool look upon the fatal news, that that night must put an end to all his hopes and pleasures, and deprive him of all those future enjoyments with which he had promised to recompense all his past toils and labours! with what regret and reluctancy was he dragged from the dear purchase of his sweat and sin! and in what agonies of horror

did he groan out his wretched spirit, when, instead of enjoying the *goods he had laid up for many years*, he felt himself sinking into a woful eternity, and lie weltering there in unquenchable flames, whilst he hoped to have been wallowing here in ease and voluptuousness! But suppose we should enjoy the many years' ease which this vainglorious fool was disappointed of, alas! those years will quickly expire, and threescore and ten, or fourscore at most, is the utmost period we can hope to arrive to; but then from thence commences an eternity of misery, which millions of millions of ages can neither shrink nor exhaust, and compared with which the longest life of pleasure hath not the proportion of one single moment. So that if, in exchange for our souls, we could purchase a lease of life as long as Methuselah's, and a lease of happiness parallel to that life, yet in the conclusion we should find it a most woful bargain; because when both these leases are expired, as they must at last, though it be long first, we must remove into a state of intolerable misery, whose duration will be always equally, because it will be always infinitely, distant from a period; and when we are there, all that long train of happiness that is past will seem but a minute's dream in comparison of that eternity of misery that is to come. But, O good God! when for thirty or forty years' pleasure upon earth I have suffered a thousand years' torment in hell, and after that have endless thousands of thousands more to suffer, how dearly shall I rue my own folly and madness, that for the sake of a few moments' pleasure have run myself headlong into such an endless misery! Consider therefore, O my soul! within a little while all these outward goods which I have

purchased by my sin will signify no more to me than if they had never been, and all their alluring relishes will be gone and forgotten for ever; but then for ten thousand millions of ages after, I shall be feeling the smart and enduring the stings of them. When all my ill-gotten wealth is shrunk into a winding-sheet, and my vast possessions into six foot of earth, and I have none of its pomps or pleasures left, either to go along with or to follow after me, then will the guilt of all stick close to me, and raise a cry on me as high as the tribunal of God; a cry that will draw down an everlasting vengeance on my head, and ring peals of thunder in my conscience for ever. Lord! what a poor amends then is the momentary enjoyment of the goods of this world to me, that after a few years must pass into another, and there languish away a long eternity under the intolerable anguish of a damned spirit!

And thus you see, upon a just survey of the gains of this world, and the loss of a soul, how infinitely short the happiness of the one is to make us any tolerable compensation for the miseries of the other. And if the gain of all the world be too little to countervail this loss, what miserable losers are the generality of men, that forfeit their souls upon a far less valuable consideration! For no man was ever yet, or is ever like to be, so prosperous in his sin, as to gain the whole world by it; that is a scramble in which millions are engaged, and of which every one will be catching a share. But, alas! for the generality, the purchase of men's sin is so small and inconsiderable, that it is scarce a valuable consideration for the soul of a rat. For what doth the common swearer get by all his senseless and impertinent oaths, which are

capable of serving no other purpose but only to stop the gaps of his speech, or to man his rage, that he may rave and play the fool a little more genteelly? What doth the drunkard gain by all his intemperances, but only a short fit of frantic mirth and extravagant jollity; which, after a few hours, ends in a sleepless night, a sick and uneasy stomach, and a sottish confusion over all his senses? What doth the envious and malicious man get by all his studied mischiefs and revenges? When he hath plucked out his enemy's eye, he cannot put it into his own head, nor can he increase the stock of his own happiness by diminishing his adversary's. When he hath made another the worse, he is never the better for it; nor do his injuries grow less by being retaliated: so that he vexes and disquiets himself to no purpose but to make his enemy bleed; he keeps his own wound green, and consequently multiplies evils in vain, and prosecutes mischief only for mischief's sake. I confess, there are some vices that are not altogether so unprofitable as these; in some vices there is a prospect of worldly gain and greatness, in others of sensitive pleasure and delight; but, alas! when after a few days' enjoyment of those gains and pleasures, I am called away from them, and transported into a woful eternity, there to expiate the guilts of them with those sharp and everlasting torments I shall be made to endure, how shall I be astonished at my own desperate folly, to think what a mad bargain I have made! what a happiness I have sold to purchase those gains! what a misery I have incurred to grasp and enjoy those pleasures! O, now what would I give for a gaol-delivery from hell, or but for the least mitigation of my agonies and torments! If I had all the

wealth that I purchased by my sin, and ten thousand times more, how willingly would I part with it, to bribe my flames and corrupt my tormentors! O, now I shall wish a thousand and a thousand times that I had rather chosen to famish for want of bread, than to enjoy those accursed profits and pleasures that were the fruits and wages of mine iniquities; but now, alas! it will be too late to repent. As yet we have the opportunity to retrieve our own folly, and to revoke and cancel this our desperate bargain; and by our serious repentance and hearty renunciation of the temptations of this world, we may release ourselves from our covenant with death and agreement with hell. But if we outstay our opportunity a few moments longer, till death hath put an end to it, the fatal bargain will be sealed past all revocation.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

UPON

JOHN I. 14.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of his Father,) full of grace and truth.

THESE words contain three distinct propositions.

I. *The Word was made flesh.*

II. *And dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.*

III. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of his Father.*

Of each of these I intend to discourse in their order.

I. The first is, That *the Word was made flesh.* In handling of which I shall do these three things:

1. Shew you what we are here to understand by *the Word.*

2. Why it is called *the Word.*

3. What we are to understand by *the Word's being made flesh.*

1. What is meant by *the Word?* I answer in general, that by *the Word* here we are to understand Christ; for in the following verse you will find that this *Word* was he of whom John the Baptist was the forerunner, and to whom he bare witness, saying, *This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.* And in the other evangelists you will find that it was Christ whose forerunner the Baptist was,

and to whom he gave this testimony, as you may see at your leisure, Matt. iii. 11. Mark i. 7. Luke iii. 16. where you find John Baptist giving the same testimony to Christ which here he gives to *the Word*, especially verse 27. of this chapter: which is a plain evidence that Christ and the Word are only different titles of the same person. But that I may more particularly explain to you the meaning of this phrase, I will briefly deliver my sense of it in these following propositions:

1. That this phrase, *the Word*, as it is by way of eminence applied to a particular subject, is derived into the New Testament from the theology of the Jews and Gentiles.

2. That the New Testament giving no distinct explication of it, it is most safe and reasonable to fetch the sense of it from that ancient theology whence it was derived.

3. That the theology from whence it was derived uses it to signify a vital and divine subsistence.

4. That therefore our Saviour, to whom it is applied in the New Testament, is that vital and divine subsistence.

1. That this phrase, *the Word*, as it is by way of eminency applied to a particular subject, is derived into the New Testament from the theology of the Jews and Gentiles: which will plainly appear to any one that shall consider the exact agreement between those titles and characters which are given to our Saviour in the New Testament, and those which the Jews and Gentiles give to the Word, so often mentioned in their theology. For as for this phrase ὁ Λόγος, *the Word*, it is very anciently used in the writings both of Jews and Gentiles. For Rab. Aza-

riel, in his treatise of holiness, quotes it out of the Book of the Creation, which was written by Rab. Abraham, an ancient cabalist, who the Jews say was the patriarch Abraham himself. "The Spirit," saith he, meaning the most high God, "bringeth forth "the Word and the Voice; and these three are one "God." Thus also it is frequently used in the Chaldee paraphrase as eminently appropriated to a divine Person: so in Isa. xlv. 17. instead of, *Israel shall be saved in the Lord*, they read it, *by the Word of the Lord*; and Jerem. i. 8. instead of, *I am with thee*, they read, *because my Word is with thee*; and Gen. xv. 1. instead of, *I am thy shield*, they read, *my Word is thy shield*: and so in sundry other places. And, which is very observable, Psalm cx. 1. instead of, *The Lord said unto my Lord*, they read, *The Lord said unto his Word*; which words our Saviour applies to himself, Matt. xxii. 44. as being himself that *eternal Word* or Λόγος there mentioned. And in the same sense also it was very anciently used in the writings of the Gentile philosophy. Thus Zeno, as Tertullian tells us [a], speaks of a Λόγος by which the world was made, and which he calls *Fate*, and *God*, and *the Soul of Jupiter*. And the ancient Orpheus, as he is quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus [b], exhorts men "to behold and contem-"plate the divine Word, who is the immortal King "of heaven." And Plato [c] tells us, that the motions of the stars were disposed and ordered by *the Word*.

[a] Tertull. Apologet. cap. 21. Pam. Hunc (i. e. Λόγον) Zeno determinat factitatorem, qui cuncta in dispositione formaverit: eundem et Fatum vocari, et Deum, et Animum Jovis.

[b] Stromat. l. v. p. 607. Εἰς δὲ Λόγον θεῖον βλέψας, τούτῳ προσέδρευε, Εὐθύνων κραδίης νοερὸν κύτος· εὖ δ' ἐπίβαινε Ἀτραπιτοῦ, μοῦνον δ' ἐσόρα κόσμοιο ἄνακτα Ἀθάνατον.

[c] Epinomis.

By which it is plain that this phrase was used as appropriate to a divine Person, both by Jews and Gentiles, long before the writing of the New Testament. And that the New Testament derived it from their writings is apparent; for that it attributes to Christ the same titles and characters which they were wont to attribute to the Λόγος. Thus, as the New Testament calls Christ the Messias, *the Word*, so the Chaldee paraphrase expressly tells us that Messias is called *the Word of God*, Oseæ, cap. vii. Thus as St. Paul calls him *the King immortal*, so Orpheus, in the aforenamed place, calls him ἄνακτα ἀθάνατον, *the King immortal*. And whereas *Christ is said to be the image of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *to be the shining forth of his glory, and the express character of his person*, Heb. i. 3. Philo calls him χαρακτὴρ Θεοῦ [d], the σκιὰ and εἰκὼν Θεοῦ [e]; that is, "the character of God, "and the shadow and image of God:" and Plotin, "that it is a light streaming forth from God, even "as brightness doth from the sun [f]." And as St. John, in the first verse of this chapter, tells us, *That the Word was from the beginning with God, and that it was God;* so Philo tells us, that "by prerogative "of eldership he abideth with the Father;" and Zeno, in the aforenamed place, "that he is God;" and Plotin [g] tells us, "That being the word of God and "the image of God, he is inseparably conjoined with "him." And whereas Christ tells us, that *he is the light of the world*, John viii. 12. *the manna which cometh down from heaven*, and *the bread of life*, John vi. 33, 35. the same Philo styles him "the

[d] Lib. ii. de Agricultura, p. 169. edit. Genev. 1613.
[e] Leg. Alleg. l. ii. p. 60.
[f] Enn. 5. l. i. c. 6.
[g] Ibid.

"word, the light[h], the manna[i]," the ἄρτος and τροφὴ ἣν ἔδωκεν ὁ Θεὸς τῇ ψυχῇ[k]; that is, "the bread and food "which God hath given to the soul." And whereas it is said, that *the Father is in Christ*, that *he dwells and abides in him*, John xiv. 10. the same author says, Πατρὸς δὲ οἶκος ὁ Λόγος, ἐν ᾧ διαιτᾶται[l]; that is, "the "Word is the house of the Father, in whom he "dwells." Whereas Christ is said to *have a name*, Phil. ii. 9. and to be advanced *above all principalities and powers*, Eph. i. 21. Philo tells us that this divine Word is ὑπεράνω παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ πρεσβύτατος τῶν ὅσα γέγονε[m]; that is, "above all worlds, and the "most ancient of all things that are." Whereas Christ is said to be *the High Priest over the house of God*, Heb. x. 21. Philo tells us that "the world "is the temple of God," ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἀρχιερεὺς ὁ πρωτόγονος αὐτοῦ θεῖος Λόγος[n]; that is, "in which the first-born di-"vine Word is the High Priest." Whereas Christ is said to be *the Son of God, and the first-born of every creature*; Plato calls him, "the begotten Son "of the Good[o];" Plotin, "the Son of God[p];" and Philo, "the first-begotten Son and Word of God[q]." Again, whereas God is said to have created the world by Christ, Heb. i. 2. and to have committed the government of it to him; Philo calls the θεῖος Λόγος, the ὁ πηδαλιοῦχος καὶ κυβερνήτης τοῦ παντὸς[r]; that is, "the "governor of all things," and the ὕπαρχος Θεοῦ[s], "the "viceroy of God;" and also ὄργανον Θεοῦ δι' οὗ ὁ κόσμος

[h] Philo de Opif. Mundi, p. 4, 5.
[i] Quod det. pot. ins. sol. p. 137.
[k] Leg. Alleg. l. ii. p. 70. et 71.
[l] De Migrat. Abrah. p. 304.
[m] Leg. Alleg. p. 71.
[n] De Somniis, p. 463.
[o] De Repub. l. vi.
[p] Enn. 5. l. viii. c. 12.
[q] De Somn. p. 463.
[r] De Cherub. p. 88.
[s] De Somn. p. 466.

κατεσκευάσθη[t]; that is, "the instrument of God by whom "he made the world." As in *Christ the fulness of the Godhead is* said *to dwell*, Coloss. ii. 9. so Plotin tells us of the Νοῦς, or Λόγος, "that it is filled with "God[u]." As Christ is called the *great Shepherd of our souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25. so Philo tells us, that "God, "who is King and Pastor of the world, hath appoint-"ed the Word his first-begotten Son," τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀγέλης, οἷά τι μεγάλου βασιλέως ὕπαρχος διαδέξεσθαι[x], "to undertake the care of his sacred flock, as his "own viceroy and substitute:" and accordingly in the same place he makes the Word to be that Angel whom God had promised to send before the camp of Israel, to conduct them through the wilderness. In short, as the angels are said to be subject unto Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 22. and as Christ is said to be the Angel or Messenger of God, John ix. 4. so Philo calls the most ancient Word the ὁ ἀρχάγγελος[y]; that is, "the prince "of the angels;" and the τὸν ἄγγελον Θεοῦ[z], "the angel "or messenger of God." And, to name no more, as Christ is called the *Mediator of the new covenant*, Heb. xii. 24. and the *Intercessor between God and man*, Heb. vii. 25. and the *propitiation* and *atonement;* so saith Philo, (which is highly worthy of our observation,) the Word ἱκέτης μέν ἐστι[a], &c. "is the in-"tercessor for mortals with the immortal God," and also "the ambassador of that great King to his sub-"jects; which office," saith he, "he willingly under-"took, saying, I will stand in the middle between "the Lord and you, as being neither unborn as God,

[t] Lib. Cherub. p. 100.
[u] Ennead. 5. l. iii. c. 12.
[x] De Agricult. p. 152.
[y] Quæst. Rerum Divin. Hær. p. 397.
[z] De Somn. p. 466.
[a] Quæst. Rer. Divin. Hær. p. 397.

"nor born as you; but being a medium between "those two extremes, I will be a pledge for both; "for his creatures, that they shall not utterly apo-"statize from him; for God, that he will not be "wanting in his fatherly care towards them." And in another place he tells us, that the θεῖος Λόγος is τῆς ἀρεσκείας κεφαλὴ καὶ τέλος[b]; that is, "the begin-"ning and the end of God's good-will to the world," which is all one with propitiation.

And these authorities of Philo I have the rather insisted upon, because he being a Jew, and a Platonic philosopher, must needs understand the theology of Jews and Gentiles; and living about the time of our Saviour, he must be supposed to have written in terms that were then in use, and were very well understood both by Jews and Gentiles: and if so, then it must necessarily follow, that this phrase, *the Word*, so common in that author, was very commonly used, both by Jews and Gentiles, in our Saviour's time, and consequently that it was derived from them, and so appropriated to our Saviour by the inspired writers of the New Testament. And indeed it is not to be imagined how those inspired writers should ever have so exactly agreed with the Jews and Gentiles in the titles and characters of the eternal Word, had not either they themselves, or the Spirit of God, which dictated to them, purposely derived it from them.

2. That the New Testament, giving no distinct explication of this phrase, *the Word*, it is most safe and reasonable to fetch the sense of it from that ancient theology whence it was derived. I do not

[b] De Somniis, p. 447.

deny but it is usual with all writers to use terms and phrases by way of accommodation, and to illustrate their sense by alluding to something that is like it; and therefore are not always to be understood in the sense which those terms and phrases do most commonly signify, but in a sense that hath some proportion with it, as the drift and connection of their discourse doth plainly intimate. But when writers use words in a literal sense, without any note of allusion, and without explaining themselves into any different sense, either they must mean the same thing which those words do commonly signify, or else they must mean to deceive and impose upon their readers. And thus stands the case before us; our Saviour is here styled *the Word*, a term of art which was very common both in the Jewish and Gentile philosophy; and neither here nor any where else is there the least intimation that he is called so only by way of allusion; nor is it in all the New Testament explained into any other sense than that wherein it was commonly used; and therefore the intent of the sacred writers in using it must be either to denote the same thing which it signified before, or to deceive and impose upon the world. But doubtless if the Holy Spirit, which inspired those writers, had meant any thing else by it than what it ordinarily signifies, he would have told us of it, and not have given us such an unavoidable occasion to mistake in so great a doctrine, by clothing its sense in such a phrase as generally signifies what he never meant. For when he called Christ by the same name, and attributed the same titles and characters by which the Jews and Gentiles were wont to describe their Λόγος, he could not but foresee

that all inquisitive persons would be apt to conclude that he meant the same thing; and therefore, if he had not meant so, he would doubtless either not have given him that name and those titles, or else, to prevent our being imposed upon by them, he would have explained them into some other meaning; which since he hath not done, we may safely and rationally conclude, that he hath meant the same thing, by this name and those titles, with those from whom he did derive them; and consequently that the most certain way for us to understand what is the sense of Christ's being the Word, is to consider what those Jews and Gentiles meant by it, from whose philosophy it was first borrowed and derived.

3. That both the Jewish and Gentile theology used this phrase, *the Word*, to signify a vital and divine subsistence. For as for the Jews, it is plain that by the Word they meant the Messias; and therefore, Psalm cx. which they say contains the mysteries of the Messias, the Chaldee Paraphrase, instead of *The Lord said unto my Lord*, read, *The Lord said unto his Word*, that is, consequently, to his Messias. And Rab. Arama upon Genesis, explaining that passage in Psalm cvii. 20. *The Lord sent forth his word, and they were healed*, expressly tells us, that by this Word is meant the Messias. And Rab. Simeon, the son of Johni, expounding those words of Job xix. 26. *yet in my flesh shall I see God*, saith, that the mercy which proceeds from the highest wisdom of God shall be crowned by the Word, and take flesh of a woman; by which it is plain, that by the Word he understood the Messias. And that by the Messias they understood a

divine subsistence, is evident from sundry places in the Chaldee Paraphrase, which often applies the name Jehovah to the Messias; which, according to the opinion of the Jews, ought not to be imparted to any creature; as particularly Isai. xxviii. 5. *Jehovah Sabbaoth* (for so it is in the Hebrew) *shall be a crown of glory unto the residue of his people;* which those interpreters understand concerning the Messias. So also Isai. xviii. 7. *In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts;* that is, say they, unto the Messias. So also, Jeremiah xxxiii. 16. by *Jehovah our righteousness*, they understand the Messias; and by the name of the *Everlasting*, Moses Hadersan understands the name of the Messias, or anointed King. And certainly, had they not believed the Messias to be a divine subsistence, they would never have attributed to him this incommunicable name of God; of which they had so high a veneration, that they thought it too sacred for any creature to name, and much more to assume. And the commentary upon the fourth Psalm expressly saith, "Because the Gentiles cease not to ask "us, Where is our God, the time will come that God "will sit among the righteous, so as they shall be "able to point him out with the finger;" which plainly refers to the coming of the Messias. And so also the Septuagint change *Shaddai*, the undoubted name of the omnipotent God, into Λόγος, *the Word*, Ezek. i. 24. where, instead of *the voice of God*, (as it is in the Hebrew,) they read φωνὴ τοῦ Λόγου, "the voice of "the Word of God." And so also the aforenamed Paraphrase, as I have already hinted, doth often use *the Word of God* for *God* himself, and that more especially with relation to the creation of the world.

Thus instead of *I made the earth*, Isai. xlv. 12. they read it, *I by my Word made the earth*: and instead of *God made man*, Gen. i. 27. the Jerusalem Targum reads, *And the Word of the Lord made man*: and instead of *They heard the voice of the Lord*, Gen. iii. 8. the Paraphrase reads it, *And they heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God*. And Philo expressly calls *this Word* the δεύτερον Θεὸν, or *second God*, next to the πατέρα τῶν πάντων.

And as the Jews believed the Word to be a divine subsistence, so did the Gentiles also. For so Numenius the Pythagorean, as he is quoted by St. Cyril [c], calls the Father the first, and the Word the second God; and Plotin tells us [d], "that this Word, "or image of God, beholdeth God, and is inseparably "joined with him;" and Porphyry, as he is cited by the forenamed father [e], tells us, that "the es-"sence of God extends to three in-beings, viz. the "highest good, which is the Father; and the maker "of all things, which is the Word; and the Soul of "the world;" and these he also calls the *first*, and *second*, and *third God*. And of Pythagoras Proclus the Platonist affirms, "that he commended three "Gods together in One, (even as Plato also doth,) the "second of which was the Word, or wisdom, where-"unto he attributes the creation of the world." And Plato, in his sixth epistle, so far owns the divinity of the Word, that he earnestly exhorts his friends that they should ὑπομνύειν τὸν τῶν πάντων Θεὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶντε ὄντων καὶ τῶν μελλόντων, τοῦτε ἡγεμόνος καὶ αἰτίου πατέρα κύριον; that is, "invocate God the Governor of

[c] Cyril. cont. Julian. l. viii.
[d] Enn. 5. l. i. c. 6.
[e] Cyril. ibid. l. i.

"all things that are and shall be, and also the Lord "and Father of that prince and governor;" by the first of which he evidently means the Word, since it is to the Word that he elsewhere[f] attributes the government of the stars and heavenly bodies. By all which it is apparent, that by the Word they understood some divine subsistence, whose nature is exalted above all finite beings whatsoever; and therefore,

4. And lastly, Our Saviour, to whom this phrase, *the Word*, is applied, must be that divine Person or subsistence. And so we find him styled in the first verse of this chapter; *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Which expressions are so exactly agreeable to the phrase of the Gentile theology, that Amelius, the disciple of Plotin, and a great enemy to the Christians, was forced to acknowledge that this is that Word which was from everlasting, and by whom all things were made, as Heraclitus supposed: and, *Per Jovem*, saith he, *barbarus iste*, meaning St. John, *cum nostro Platone consentit, Verbum Dei in ordine principii esse*[g]. "This bar-"barian is of our Plato's mind, that the Word of "God is ranked among the principles." And indeed, unless we understand this place of the eternal Deity of the Word, I know not how it will be possible to make any tolerable sense of it; for if by *In the beginning* here, we understand, as the Socinians would have us, *In the beginning of the gospel*, when John Baptist began to preach, the words will imply a gross tautology, and the sense of them must be this; that

[f] Plat. Epinom.

[g] St. Austin. de Civit. Dei, l. x.

Christ was when John Baptist preached that he was; or, which is all one, that he was when he was. For how can it be worthy of an apostle so solemnly to assert, that the Word had a being in the beginning of the gospel, when we know the Baptist taught as much himself! who therefore came *baptizing with water, that he should be made manifest to Israel*, John i. 31. And when St. Matthew and St. Luke, who wrote before, taught us more than this, viz. that he was in being thirty years before, when we are sure it was as true of any other then living as of the Word, even of Judas that betrayed him, and Pilate who condemned him. By *In the beginning*, therefore, must be meant the beginning of the world; and that even then *the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* So Phil. ii. 6, 7. *Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.* From whence these three conclusions do most naturally result: first, that Christ was *in the form of a servant* as soon as he was made man; secondly, that he was *in the form of God* before he was in *the form of a servant;* and, thirdly, that he was in *the form of God;* that is, did as really and truly subsist in the divine nature, as in *the form of a servant*, or in the nature of man. For the words literally translated run thus; *but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being in the likeness of men:* which plainly implies, that Christ was full before he emptied himself, that he emptied himself by taking *the form of a servant*, that he took *the form of a servant* by *being made in the likeness of men;* which emptying presupposes a

precedent plenitude, and which plenitude consisted in being so *in the form of God* as to think it *no robbery to be equal with God.* So, Rev. i. 11. he solemnly proclaims his own divinity; *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,* which is the incommunicable title by which God describes his own being, and distinguishes it from all others. And Isai. xliv. 6. *I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.* These and many other plain assertions there are in the New Testament, of the eternal Deity of the blessed Word. But since the eternal God was constantly, both by the Jews and Gentiles, signified by this phrase, *the Word,* there is no reason to imagine that St. John should make use of it in any other notion, since in so doing he would have imposed upon the world, and taken an effectual course to make us believe that he meant what he never intended.

And so I have done with the first thing proposed, which was to shew you what is here meant by Christ's being *the Word;* the design of which, you see, is to express his eternal Godhead and Divinity.

2. I now proceed to the next thing proposed, which was to shew you for what reason it is that he is here called *the Word.* In answer whereunto, it is to be considered, that the word Λόγος hath a twofold signification: first, it signifies reason, which is the inferring one thing from another, and this is the birth and offspring of the mind: secondly, it signifies speech, which is an audible expression of our thoughts and reasonings, and this is the image and interpreter of our minds; and it is also the executor of the mind, especially in those who are in sovereign authority, and do rule by their word and command.

Now our blessed Saviour is called *the Word* upon both these accounts; both as he is the reason and the speech of God; and accordingly his being *the Word* denotes these four things:

1st, His being generated of the mind of the Father.

2dly, His being the perfect image of that mind.

3dly, His being the interpreter of his Father's mind to us.

4thly, His being the executor of his Father's mind.

1st, His being generated of the mind of the Father, even as our word or reason is the issue and offspring of our minds. For it was the opinion both of the Jews and Gentiles, that the eternal Word is nothing else but that most perfect notion, idea, and conception which God from the beginning had formed of himself and all other beings in his own mind. For thus the Jews tell us, that every thing below hath some root above; which roots, say they, are the sephiroth, or seals by which all these inferior substances are stamped, and shaped, and fashioned; and these seals, they tell us, are those most perfect ideas of things which God did form in his own mind, according to which he fashioned all the beings that are in the world. "For," say they [h], "all the three "worlds, that is, the rational, sensitive, and inani-"mate, were printed with the print, and sealed with "the same seal; (that is, that great seal in the mind "of God, consisting of the ideas of all things;) and "that which is sealed, and receiveth the sealing here "below, is like to the shape and form of those things

[h] Vide Dr. Cudworth, of the Union of Christ and the Church.

"above, which did seal and stamp the signature upon "them." And these three worlds, say they, being one below another, God set upon them the seal of sephiroth so hard, that he printed them quite through the bottom of them; that is, he stamped them all into an exact resemblance to those ideas which he had formed of them in his own mind. So that according to them, before God made the world he framed the idea and model of it in his own understanding, which, together with that idea or notion which from all eternity he conceived of himself, they called the Λόγος, or *eternal Word of God.* Hence Philo calls *the Word of God* the εἰκόνα Θεοῦ, and also the σφραγῖδα[i], and the ἀρχέτυπον παράδειγμα, and the ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν[k]. And tells us, that as a city before it was made existed only in the mind of the builder, so the world hath no other place, ἢ τὸν θεῖον Λόγον τὸν ταῦτα διακοσμήσαντα, that is, "than the divine Word that made it." And afterwards he tells us, that the intellectual world, that is, the world which contains the ideas of all things, οὐδὲν ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἢ Θεοῦ Λόγον ἤδη κοσμοποιοῦντος[l], "is nothing else but the Word of God now "making the world." And accordingly the Jews called *the Word* the wisdom of God, and tell us[m], "that "this wisdom is of the most inward understanding "of God, who beholds himself in himself." From all which it is apparent, that the Jews attributed the original of this divine Word to the mind of the Father, it being, according to their divinity, nothing else but that most perfect conception and idea which God from everlasting formed of himself, and all other

[i] De Mundi Opif. p. 5.
[k] Ibid. p. 3.
[l] Ibid. p. 4.
[m] Rab. Isaac Ben Schola, on the last verses of the 111th and 112th Psalms.

beings, in his own mind. In which opinion the most divine philosophers of the Gentiles also do most exactly consent. And hence they generally call *the Word* the νοῦς, or *understanding* of the Father, he being the perfect idea or conception by which the Father understands himself and all other things. And accordingly Alcinous tells us [n], "that both Socrates and Plato taught that God is a mind, and "that in the same there is a certain idea, which, in "respect of God, is that knowledge which God hath "of himself, and in respect of the world, is the pattern or mould thereof, and in respect of itself, is "very essence." And Plotin tells us [o], "that God is "both the party that is conceived in the mind or "understanding, and also the party that conceives "him;" and he makes the Word to be that which God doth mind in himself, which is himself, and his own immense perfections; and that the nature of that idea of himself which he beholds in himself, is an act that issues from him, which consists in beholding and reminding of himself, and in beholding him becomes the selfsame thing with him. And this understanding or knowledge which God hath of himself, he calls [p], "the Son of the sovereign Father, "that bears the like resemblance to him as the light "doth to the sun in the firmament." And, to name no more, Porphyry, as he is quoted by St. Cyril, tells us, "that it was the doctrine of Plato, that of the Good, "(which elsewhere he calls the Father,) is begotten "an understanding in a manner unknown to men, in "which are all things that truly are, and the essences "of all things that have a being;" that is, the substan-

[n] Alcin. de Doctrina Platonis.
[o] Plot. Enn. 5. l. vi. c. 1.
[p] Enn. 5. l. viii. c. 12. et Enn. 5. l. i. c. 7.

tial ideas of God, and all created things whatsoever. And upon this account it is that they call this divine subsistence *the Word*, because it was generated by the mind of the Father, even as our words are generated by our minds. And accordingly the ancient Jews and Christian Fathers do generally expound that great elogium of Wisdom, Prov. viii. concerning the eternal Word; where it is said, that *Wisdom was set up from everlasting, and possessed by God in the beginning of his way; that it was brought forth by him before the world;* and that when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then *was it by him, as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him*, ver. 22—31. And this notion the New Testament doth plainly refer to, when it calls Christ the *Wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. which is the same title that both Jews and Platonists give to the Word, upon the account of his being that eternal knowledge and understanding which God hath of himself and all other beings; and in this, John i. 4. the apostle seems plainly to hint this notion to us; for, speaking there of the Word, *In him*, saith he, *was life; and the life was the light of men.* Now I think it will be hard to give any natural account how that life that was in the Word should enlighten men, unless we suppose his very life and being to consist in knowledge and understanding; for by the *light of men* here is plainly meant that divine knowledge which is revealed to the world by Christ; and this divine knowledge he tells us is the very life of the Word, or the life that was in the Word: and afterwards he expressly calls the Word *the light* itself, from whence all our knowledge of God and

goodness is derived, verse 9. which is exactly the same with what Philo saith of the Word. viz. that "he is the intellectual Sun that is altogether light;" and with what Plotin saith of the Νοῦς, or divine Mind [q], "that he is a light shed forth every where, "streaming from God, and begotten of him." Which is a plain evidence of Christ's being the substantial light, knowledge, or idea of all things which God from everlasting formed in his own mind, and of his being therefore called *the Word of God*, because he is the offspring of God's understanding, even as our reason is the offspring of ours.

2dly, He is called *the Word of God*, because he is the perfect image of God, even as the word is the image of the mind: for thus, as I have already told you, the eternal Word is very frequently called the image of God both by the Jews and Gentiles. For so Plotin [r]; that "this divine understanding, being the "very word of God, and image of God, everlastingly "beholds God, and cannot be separated from him;" and [s] "that it is the begotten issue, word, and image "of the sovereign God." And Plato himself calls him, "the begotten Son of the Good, and most like "unto him in all things [t];" the ἔκγονος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ὁμοιότατος ἐκείνῳ, and afterwards, τὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἔκγονον, ὃν τἀγαθὸν ἐγέννησεν ἀνάλογον ἑαυτῷ; that is, "the begot-"ten Son of the Good, who is most like unto him-"self." And Rab. Moses, the son of Neheman, as he is quoted by Masius, proving that that Angel of God's presence which went before the camp of Israel was the Messias, or eternal Word, tells us, that he is therefore called *the Angel of God's presence*,

[q] Enn. 5. l. i.
[r] Enn. 5. l. i. c. 6.
[s] Ibid. l. ii.
[t] Plato de Repub. l. vi. p. 478.

nimirum quia ille angelus est facies Dei; "because "he is the face of God, in whom God's face was to "be seen." And so Philo the Jew also doth very frequently call the Word[u] the "image and resem- "blance of God," and the ἀπεικόνισμα, "the most per- "fect and exact representation of God." For they suppose that God being omniscient, he must necessarily know himself, and that knowing himself, necessarily he must act *ad extremum virium*, to the utmost of his power, even as all other necessary agents do; that acting to the utmost of his power, he must by knowing himself produce as perfect an image, idea, or notion of himself in his own understanding, as it was possible for him to do; that it was possible for him to produce such a vital and substantial idea of himself, as is vested with all the infinite perfections of his nature; and consequently that such an idea he hath produced, and that this idea is the eternal Word. For God can do whatsoever doth not imply a contradiction; now there is nothing in God but what he can communicate without a contradiction, but only self-existence; that implies a contradiction indeed, for God to cause another thing to be without any cause, and to exist of itself. But as for all his other perfections, he may communicate them; and when he acts necessarily, as he is supposed to do in the generation of the Word, he must, because then he acts to his utmost possibility. So then the Word must have the same nature, essence, and perfections with the Father; and the only imaginable difference between them must be this; that whereas the Father exists of himself, the Word exists of the

[u] Philo, Legis Alleg. l. ii. p. 60.

Father, which is exactly agreeable to the catholic notion of Christians. And indeed if it be granted that God, who is infinitely knowing, must necessarily know himself perfectly, then it will seem to follow, that there must be the same perfections in that idea or notion by which he knows himself, that there are in himself; for else it is not one perfect idea of him. And hence it is that our notions do so imperfectly resemble things, because we cannot communicate to them that life and substance that is in the things themselves; and therefore if God knows himself perfectly, as he must needs do, being infinitely knowing, he must communicate life and substance to the notion of himself, or else it will be no perfect notion of his life and substance; and he must communicate to it all the immense perfections of his own nature, or else it will be no perfect notion of his own perfections. So then the eternal Word, which is here supposed to be the most perfect notion of the Father, must be a vital and substantial idea, endued with all the perfections of the divine nature, which is also very agreeable with the Christian notion of the divine Word: for he is described to be the *image of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *the brightness of his glory, and the express character of his person*, Heb. i. 3. and being so, he must necessarily be what God is, i. e. God essential, or else he cannot be the perfect image and express character of God. And accordingly in the New Testament he is called *God over all, blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. and the perfections of the divine nature are very frequently attributed to him, as particularly *omniscience*, John xvi. 30. *eternity*, Heb. i. 12. and Rev. xxii. 13. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the*

last. So that upon this account also he may very properly be called *the Word of God*, because as our words are the images of our minds, so he is the most perfect image of God.

3dly, He is called *the Word*, because he is the interpreter of the Father's mind, even as our words also are the interpreters of our minds to others. And this Philo the Jew doth also take notice of as the proper work and office of the Word to be Πρεσβευτὴς τοῦ Ἡγεμόνος πρὸς τὸ ὑπήκοον[x], "the Ambassador of the "great King to his subjects, to communicate his "mind and will to them;" and also "the Angel and "Messenger of God to men, to declare his will and "pleasure to them:" and that in the execution of this office he doth τοῖς μὲν ὡς βασιλεὺς ἃ χρὴ πραττεῖν ἐξ ἐπιτάγματος παραγγέλλειν[y], &c. "some as a king he com-"mands what they shall do, others as a schoolmaster "he profitably instructs, others as a counsellor he "faithfully admonishes; all which he performs as "the interpreter of the mind of God." And elsewhere he calls him the θεοποίητος Ἥλιος[z], the divine "Sun that enlightens the souls of men;" and elsewhere he expressly calls him "the interpreter of the "mind of God to men:" so that it seems it was upon this account, as well as others, that he was called by the ancients "the Word of God." And the same account is given of it in the New Testament. So John i. 18. *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* Where there is a particular reason assigned, why, though other men interpreted the mind of God to us, yet Christ alone is called *the*

[x] Quis rer. div. hær. p. 397. [z] De Charitate, p. 552.
[y] De Somn. p. 461.

Word of God; because he only was the immediate interpreter of the divine will, even as the word which we speak is of ours. For he was in the very bosom of the Father, and there understood his mind, not by the instructions of an angel, nor by dreams and visions, nor only by the Holy Ghost, but by an immediate intuition of his thoughts and purposes, which from all eternity were exposed to his view and prospect. For as St. Gregory Nazianzen hath observed, he had the same relation to the Father, as the inward thought hath to the mind, because of his intimate conjunction with him, and power to declare him to the world. For the Father is known by the Son, who is a brief and easy demonstration of the Father, as every thing that is begotten is σιωπῶν λόγος, "the silent word of that which doth beget it."

4thly and lastly, He is called *the Word*, because he is the executor of his Father's will, even as the word and command of a king is the executor of his will and pleasure: for according to the sense of the ancients, God hath from the very beginning governed the world by his eternal Λόγος, whom they therefore call *the immortal King, the Governor of all things that are or shall be*, and the *Viceroy of the great God*, as I have already shewed you at large. And it was by this Word that God executed his will when he made the world; *for by his word he made the heavens; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth*, Psalm xxxiii. 6. He did but say the word, *Let there be light, and there was light;* and to his powerful and efficacious fiat the whole frame of nature was but a real echo. For these expressions, *Let there be light*, and, *Let there be a firmament*, &c. are not perhaps so to be understood as if

God did actually pronounce those syllables, but they rather seem to be a popular description of the infinite energy of the eternal Word by which God made the heavens and the earth, to whom it was as easy to give being to the world, as it was to command it to be; and that passage of the Psalmist, *by the word of the Lord were the heavens made*, and of the author to the Hebrews, Heb. xi. 3. that *the worlds were framed by the word of God*, seem rather to denote that powerful act of creation which was exerted by the vital and substantial Word of God, whereby he instantly, and as it were with a word's speaking, gave existence to those beings he intended to create, than any articulate words or phrases pronounced by God himself; because in this chapter, and many other places of the New Testament, it is expressly said, that God made the world by Christ, who is that living and substantial Word that was with God from the beginning. Well therefore may Christ be called *the Word of God*, since by him God doth as effectually execute his will, as if it were done by the word of his own mouth. For Christ hath such power, both in heaven and earth, that at his word and command all things are presently done according to his will; and therefore you may observe in that vision to St. John, Rev. xix. 13. Jesus, being represented as the *King of kings*, and *Lord of lords, clothed in a royal purple robe*, is called by the name of *The Word of God*, when he was executing the divine vengeance upon the nations by that power which he hath at God's right hand.

3. I now pass on to the third and last thing, namely, what we are to understand by *the Word's being made flesh*, of which I shall give you a brief

account, and then conclude with a few short inferences from the whole. Which words, *being made flesh*, we ought not so to understand as if the eternal Word was changed or converted into flesh, as Cerinthus taught; or as if the flesh was changed or converted into the Word, as Valentinus ridiculously asserted; for the Deity is immutable, and as it can be changed into nothing, so nothing can be changed into it. But by flesh we are to understand man, a part being put for the whole; for so the scripture doth very frequently call man flesh, that being one of the ingredients of his nature. Thus, Psalm lvi. 4. *I will not fear what flesh can do unto me:* Jerem. xvii. 5. *Cursed be the man that maketh flesh his arm;* that is, that puts his confidence in man: Matt. xxiv. 22. *Except those days be shortened, no flesh shall be saved;* that is, no man: and Rom. iii. 20. *No flesh shall be justified in his sight;* that is, no man shall be justified. So here, *the Word was made flesh;* that is, *the Word* was made man. Not that the divine nature was converted into the nature of man; but the meaning is, it was made one with man, even as our soul is not turned into nor confounded with the body, yet they two, though distinct in natures, grow into one man; so the manhood of Christ was assumed, or taken into *the Word*, both being united into one person, the natures being preserved entire and distinct, without any mixture or confusion. For as the fourth general council hath defined it, "He was so made flesh, that he ceased not "to be the Word, never changing that he was, but "assuming that which he was not." And though our humanity was advanced by it, yet his divinity was not at all diminished; and *the mystery of godliness*

God manifested in the flesh, was no detriment to the godhead, which is always unchangeably the same: and therefore the seeming harshness of this expression may be easily mollified, by comparing it with others of the same import; for elsewhere it is said, that *he was manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. which only denotes that the divinity was made known, and did appear in the world in a human nature. Elsewhere it is said, that *he took on him the nature of man*, Heb. ii. 16. which only denotes that the divinity did assume the human nature to it, and was personally united with it. So here, *the Word was made flesh*; that is, *the Word* was made one with the flesh, by assuming the human nature into a personal union with itself.

Having thus explained to you the sense and meaning of the words, I shall now conclude this argument with three or four short inferences from the whole.

1. From hence we may infer the eternal divinity of our blessed Saviour, even from this great name, *the Word*, that is here attributed to him. For since it is so apparent that this phrase is a term of art, derived from the schools of the Jews and Gentiles, and since by it they did all so generally understand a divine person subsisting from all eternity, it must necessarily follow, that the Holy Ghost deriving it from them, and applying it to our blessed Saviour, must use it to the same sense; for otherwise he were better never to have used it at all, because by discoursing in the same language with them, he will give us just occasion to think that he means the same thing, namely, that Christ, whom he calls *the Word*, is a divine person subsisting from all eternity; which if

he doth not mean by using that term, he will almost necessarily betray us into a false belief concerning our Saviour. As, to instance briefly in a case of another nature; our Saviour in his sermons doth frequently press us to meekness and patience, humility and charity; all which are terms frequently used long before in the moral philosophy both of the Jews and Gentiles, by which they signify such and such particular virtues. Since therefore our Saviour doth use the same terms with them, we have just reason to conclude that he means the same virtues by them; and should he mean any thing else, his very using of these terms would necessarily impose upon us a false sense of his meaning; for how should we understand his meaning, but by his words? and how should we understand his words, but by the common import and signification of them? And can we imagine that the Spirit of truth would have ever described our Saviour by a term that was so generally used to signify a divine person subsisting from all eternity, and used it too, as he doth, without any restraint or limitation, nay, and so seemingly at least to the same purpose, as he doth in the three first verses of this chapter, where he describes the divine nature and operations of Christ *the Word* in the same terms in which the Jews and Gentiles were wont to describe the divinity of their Λόγος; can we imagine, I say, that the Holy Spirit would have done thus, had he known Christ to be nothing but a mere man, that never was before he was born of his mother? Far be it from us to charge that blessed Spirit with imposing such a delusion upon mankind.

2. Hence I infer, the astonishing love of our blessed Saviour in condescending so low as to be made

flesh for us, and assume our nature. For what he was before he took our nature, you have heard already: he was no less than the *eternal Word of the Father;* in whose bosom he enjoyed the supremest degree of bliss and happiness, being crowned with glory, and encircled about with the essential rays of the divinity. And yet such was his love to poor mortals, so infinite was his zeal and concern for our happiness, that, seeing the misery we were plunged into, he could not rest, no not in the blessed arms of his Father, but strip himself of all his majesty and bliss, and comes down among us, and assumes our nature to save and rescue us, and invite and lead us to those heavenly mansions from whence he descended to us. Lord, what a prodigy of love was here, as doth not only puzzle my conceit, but outreach my wonder and admiration! for when I seriously consider it, though it be a blessing beyond all my hopes, and such as I could never have had the impudence to desire; yet it fills my mind with an awful horror, to think that there was a time when the great God was here upon the earth in my form and nature, and conversed familiarly with such mortal wights as myself; and for my sake, and such poor worms as I, patiently underwent the common infirmities of men, and willingly exposed himself to the contempt and scorn of a malevolent world, and the malice and cruelty of those barbarous men to whom he gave being, and could with the breath of his nostrils have scattered into atoms; and all this in mere compassion to a company of apostatized natures, who had so highly deserved to be thrown from his care and mercy for ever. O my soul, how am I astonished at this miracle of love! Methinks, when I consider

it, I am looking down from a stupendous precipice, whose height fills me with a trembling horror, and even oversetting reason.

3. From hence I infer, what mighty obligations we have for ever to love and serve our blessed Redeemer. If our hearts are capable of being warmed into any degree of affection, sure it is impossible but we must be affected at such an unheard of instance of love. For the Son of God to leave his Father's bosom, where he was infinitely more happy than we can express and think of, and disguise himself in mortal flesh, and become *a man of sorrows*, that he might make me a man of endless joys; can my heart hold when I think of this? is it possible I should reflect upon such a prodigious instance of affection, without being rapt into an ecstasy of love? Blessed Jesus, what barbarous hearts do we carry about with us, that will not melt before the flames of thy love! flames that are sufficient to kindle seraphims, and to fill all reasonable breasts with burning affections towards thee! for how is it possible that any man, I had almost said that any devil, should be so disingenuous and ill-natured as not to be affected with such stupendous kindness! When we see a child slight his careful and indulgent parents, we are ready to account him an unnatural monster; when we see a man neglect his friend, or disregard his benefactor, we presently call him base and ungrateful; nay, when we see one abuse a poor brute creature that fawns upon him, and expresses its kindness to him, we look upon it as an undoubted sign of a very hard heart and an ill nature: what term then can we find in all the world of words that is odious enough to express our disaffection to our blessed Redeemer, to

whom we are so infinitely obliged! *base, disingenuous, ill-natured,* and *ungrateful,* are all too soft; it is something beyond *barbarous* and *devilish.* For one would think that neither the most inhuman cannibal on earth, nor the blackest devil in hell, could ever be guilty of so foul a crime, which hath something in it too monstrous for any words to express. Well therefore may the heavens be astonished, and the earth tremble, and all the creation of God stand amazed at us, to see how insensible we are of this most ravishing and endearing love. Well may we be amazed at ourselves, and wonder at our own stupidity, to think that the Son of God should be so kind as to come down from heaven to visit us, to leave the habitation of his glory, and shroud his divinity in mortal flesh, and make himself a miserable wight, merely that he might make us happy, and advance us to that glory and bliss which for our sakes he willingly abandoned; and yet that we are no more touched and affected with it, than with the most indifferent thing in the world. Blessed God, what are we made of! what kind of souls do we carry about with us, that no kindness will oblige us, no not the most endearing that ever was known or heard of! Doubtless should any man have shewn us but half this kindness, should a friend but offer to die for us, or a prince to descend from his throne, and put himself into the state of a beggar to enrich and advance us in the world, we should have thought ourselves bound to him as long as we lived; and should we have thought any services too much, any requitals too dear for him, we should have been looked upon as monsters of ingratitude, as the reproaches and scandals of human nature, and been hissed out

of all society for a company of infamous villains, unworthy of the least respect or favour from mankind. But for a friend to die, or a prince to become a beggar for our sakes, alas! what poor inconsiderable things are they, compared with the condescensions of the Son of God, who humbled himself much lower in becoming a man, than the most glorious angel in heaven could have done in assuming the nature of a worm. And can we be so inhuman as not to be moved by such a miracle of condescending love? Is it the less, because it is the love of God, or doth it less deserve our requital? What excuse then can we make for our wretched insensibility? O ungrateful that we are! with what confidence can we shew our heads among reasonable beings, after we have so barbarously slighted our best friend, and behaved ourselves so disingenuously towards our greatest benefactor? How can we pretend to any thing that is modest or ingenuous, tender or apprehensive in human nature, when nothing will oblige us, no not that astonishing love that made the Son of God leave all his glory, and become a poor miserable mortal for our sakes? O blessed Jesus! what do thy holy angels think of us! how do thy blessed saints resent our unkindness towards thee! yea, how justly will the devils themselves reproach and upbraid our baseness, who, bad as they are, were never so much devils yet as to spurn the love of a Redeemer, coming down from heaven to die and suffer for their sakes! Wherefore, as we would not be hissed at by all the reasonable world, and become spectacles of horror to God, and angels, and devils, let us endeavour to affect ourselves with the love of our Redeemer, and to inflame our own souls with the sense of his kindness,

who hath done such mighty things to endear and oblige us.

4. From hence I infer, what monstrous disingenuity it would be in us to think much of parting with any thing, or doing any thing for the sake of Christ, who, for our sakes, parted with his Father's bosom, and all those infinite delights which he there enjoyed, and united himself to our miserable nature, that he might make us good and happy for ever. And now, after all this, with what conscience or modesty can we grudge to do any thing which he shall require at our hands? Should he command me to descend into the lowest form of beings, and to become the most wretched and contemptible of all animals, could I be such a caitiff as to deny him, who descended much lower for the sake of me? Should he remand me back into nonentity, and bid me cease to be for ever, alas! the distance is nothing so great between me and nothing, as it was betwixt him and that human nature which he assumed for my sake. Should he require me to die for him under all those lingering and exquisite tortures which the blessed martyrs suffered for his name, what proportion were there between what he requires of me, and what he hath done for me? He only requires that I should pass through death to heaven for him, but he came from heaven to pass through death for me: so that for his sake I should only put off a wretched garment of flesh, that I may be enrobed with glory and immortality; but for my sake he put off his robes of glory and majesty, that he might wear my frail and mortal flesh, and therein reconcile me to God, and make me everlastingly happy. And when I may advance myself into an

equality with angels, by suffering the agonies of a miserable death for him, shall I refuse, or think much of it, when he, who was equal with God in glory and happiness, was so ready to be born a wretched miserable man for me? Should he require me to give my substance to the poor, and leave myself destitute of all supplies and comforts; could I deny so poor a request to him, who forsook a heaven of infinite pleasures for my sake, and exposed himself naked to the mercy of a wretched, wicked, and ill-natured world, from whom he could expect nothing but the most barbarous contempt and cruelty? Sure, one would think it were impossible for any reasonable being to deny such poor, such inconsiderable boons to such a great and deserving Benefactor; and yet these are much more than what he ordinarily requires at our hands. For that which he ordinarily requires of us is, that we would forsake those vices which are as injurious to us as they are hateful to him, and which are therefore hateful to him because they are our enemies; and that we would practise those virtues in which the perfection and happiness of our nature is involved, and which we can no more be happy without, than we can be without being. And can I think much to part with those lusts for his sake, which are my shames and infelicities, who never grudged to part with heaven for mine? Can they be as dear to me as his Father's bosom was to him? And yet he left that for love of me; and shall not I leave these for love of him? Methinks, if we will not part with them for our own sakes, as being destructive to our peace and happiness, yet, had we the least spark of ingenuity in us, we should gladly part with them for the sake

of our Saviour, who for ours was so ready to part with all that was dear to him. Can we be such wretches as to refuse to serve him, when he requires nothing of us but what we are obliged to by our own interest? Are we so lost to all that is ingenuous and modest, that we will not obey him, when he only requires us to be kind to ourselves? O wretched mortals! Doth his coming down from heaven to save you deserve this barbarous treatment at your hands, that to spite him you should injure yourselves, and wound his authority through your own sides? Had he been wholly indifferent to you, it had been very unreasonable to reject his service, when it altogether consists in serving yourselves; but to disobey so dear a friend, to whom we are obliged by such stupendous favours, when he enjoins us nothing but the means of our own happiness, is such a piece of monstrous and unnatural baseness, as the Devil himself can hardly parallel. O unkind that we are! that we will not be good to ourselves for our Saviour's sake, and that when he conjures us to it, as he doth, even by all the love that we owe him! For so John xiv. 15. *If ye love me*, saith he, *keep my commandments;* "Consider what mighty "things I have done for you; how I left my throne "in heaven for your sakes, and became a miserable "mortal man: and now that I am going from you, "and am offering up my life to redeem you, if ever "I have merited any love at your hands, express it "in keeping my commandments. It is no great mat-"ter that I require of you, it is only that you would "be kind to yourselves, that you would let misery "alone, and endeavour to be as happy as heaven can "make you. This is all the requital that I expect

"at your hands, that you would be as good and "happy as I would have you; and this, which is the "sum of all my commands, I conjure you strictly to "observe, even by all the love that you owe me." O blessed Jesus! one would have thought thou hadst been requiring some mighty trial of our love to thee; that we should do some great thing for thee, to which nothing could prompt us but only our gratitude and kindness: but when thou only requirest us to express our love to thee, in doing that which is the highest expression of our love to ourselves, can we be so disingenuous as not to do that for thy sake, to whom we are so infinitely obliged, which we are bound to do for our own sakes as well as thine?

5. And lastly, Hence I infer, what a glorious thing it is to do good, since the Son of God, having so great an opportunity of doing good to the world, thought it worth his while to come down from heaven, and assume our natures, and undergo our miseries, as if he esteemed it more glorious and becoming the majesty and divinity of his person to dwell upon earth with poor miserable mortals, among whom he might do the greatest good, than to sit above upon the throne of heaven, and receive the most humble adorations of angels: for it was only for an opportunity of doing the greatest good, that he exchanged the glory and happiness of heaven; choosing rather to become a miserable man to make others good and happy, than to continue among those infinite delights with which the heavenly state abounds. What a most glorious thing then is it to do good, when our most wise Redeemer chose it before heaven itself; when he thought it more eligible

to come down upon earth and make us happy, than to dwell in the bosom of his Father, and shine in heaven with the brightness and glory of his divinity. And if there be nothing in heaven so glorious as doing good, what is there upon earth that may be compared unto it? What dim, what sullied things are all the pomps and splendours of this world, compared with the glory of doing good to others, when God preferred it before heaven itself! To conquer kingdoms, to lead the world in triumph after us, how mean and inconsiderable are they, compared with that glory which the Son of God forsook merely to do good to the world! A thing which he esteemed so great and illustrious, that he did not only leave heaven for it, but scorned and despised the kingdoms of the earth; finding nothing below that was worthy of him, but only to go about doing good! for this was his constant employment, as you may see, Acts x. 21. And now, is it possible that, after this great example, we should think beneficence a cheap or vulgar thing? Can we think it a dishonour to stoop to the meanest offices, whereby we may serve the souls or bodies of our brethren, when the Son of God came down from heaven, and veiled his glory in mortal flesh, for no other end but to do good? O foolish creatures that we are! did we but understand and consider what a magnificent thing it is to supply the necessities of men, and contribute to their happiness, we should doubtless embrace it as our greatest preferment, and think ourselves bound to bless God for ever, for furnishing us with occasions of doing good; that he doth deem us worthy of such an illustrious employment, to have some share with himself in the glory of it; that he will

vouchsafe to us an opportunity to honour and magnify ourselves by acting this divine, this godlike part in the world. Never then let us think that we dishonour ourselves, though we stoop never so low, when it is to do good; no, though it be to visit a beggar, to dress the sores of a poor lazar, to instruct or comfort the meanest wretch in all thy neighbourhood. For now thou actest the part of God, in doing the most glorious thing in all the world; a thing for which the greatest princes may envy thee, and the blessed God for ever applaud thee. Now thou art doing that which the Son of God came down from heaven to do, and which he thought more worthy of his choice than to reign over angels in heaven: so that either we must say, that he was unwise for preferring it before heaven, or else we must acknowledge that we are infinitely foolish in preferring any thing in the world before it.

II. I now proceed to the second proposition, *And dwelt among us full of grace and truth.* For that these latter words, *full of grace and truth*, belong to the former, *and dwelt among us*, you may plainly see by the parenthesis in your Bible, by which they are interrupted and broken off from one another. In the explication of these words, I shall do these two things:

1. Inquire what is here meant by *the Word's dwelling among us.*

2. What we are to understand by his being *full of grace and truth.*

1. What is here meant by *the Word's dwelling among us?* In the Greek it is ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, that is, "he pitched his tabernacle among us:" which seems plainly to refer to God's dwelling in the tabernacle

under the Mosaic law. For the Greek word σκηνόω comes immediately from the Hebrew *shacan*, and differs from it only by the Greek termination; and from *shacan* comes the word *shechinah*, by which the Hebrews were wont to express God's glorious presence upon earth, and especially his habitation in the holy tabernacle between the two cherubims, where he is said to dwell, 1 Sam. iv. 4. and 2 Sam. vi. 2. because from thence God was wont to speak, and discover himself by a visible brightness and glory; and accordingly this presence or habitation of God is called in the Greek δόξα and ἐπιφάνεια, *glory* and *appearing:* thus, Numb. xvi. 19. it is said, that when the congregation drew near to the tabernacle, *the glory of the Lord appeared unto them;* and ver. 42. it is said, that *a cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared.* So when *the glory is* said to be *departed from Israel,* 1 Sam. iv. 21. it is plain that by that *glory* is meant this visible appearance of God in a glorious brightness from between the cherubims. So, Rev. xxi. when it had been said of the *new Jerusalem,* that it was σκηνὴ, *the tabernacle of God with us,* ver. 3. that being repeated again, ver. 11. is said to *have the glory of God* in it, and the *glory of God* to enlighten it, ver. 23. Now it seems most probable, that this glorious *shechinah,* presence, or habitation of God, consisted in the presence of angels; who being the courtiers of heaven, where they appear, there God is said to be peculiarly present. And hence it is that the well Lahi-roi, where the angel appeared to Hagar, Gen. xvi. 7, 14. is by the Jerusalem Targum styled the well, *ubi manifestata illi fuit præsentia Domini majestatica,* "where the

"presence of God in majesty was manifested to "her:" and that visible glory which appeared from between the cherubims is called by the same name, viz. the *gloria majestaticæ præsentiæ Domini*, "the "glory of the majestic presence of God:" which is a plain evidence, that the Jews believed the majestic presence of God to be nothing else but the appearance of angels. And of the same mind was the author to the Hebrews, Heb. ii. 2. *For the law*, saith he, *was spoken by angels*; and so St. Stephen, Acts vii. 53. *The law was received by the disposition of angels*; and St. Paul, that *the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator*, Gal. iii. 19. Whereas Exod. xix. 11. compared with xx. 22. it is said, that *the Lord came down in the sight of all the people, and talked with them*; that is, as you will there find, he spoke the law to them: which is a plain evidence, that that glorious descent of God's presence upon mount Sinai, where the law was spoken, was, in the opinion of the author to the Hebrews, nothing but the presence of angels; who, when they were to represent the divine presence, were wont to appear in bright and radiant bodies: and therefore where it is said in Isaiah's vision, Isa. vi. 1. that *he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne*, and that *his train filled the temple*; that is, his train of angels: and this train of angels our Saviour calls *the glory of the Lord*, John xii. 41. which is the same with the *shechinah*, or majestic presence: and therefore perhaps they are called *angels of light*, in reference to that lucid, shining, flaming appearance which they were wont to make: and in Psalm civ. 4. God is said *to make his ministers a flaming fire*; that is, when they are to make

a visible representation of his majestic presence to mankind. But besides this, Isa. lxiii. 9. you have mention made of *the angel of God's presence which saved Israel;* which seems to denote the head and chief of those angels, which by their glorious appearances did represent God to mankind. By which angel the Jews did generally understand the Messias, or eternal Word: for so Philo[a], speaking of God's committing the care of his flock to his first-born Son, the Word, tells us, "that this is that angel whom God promised to send before the camp "of Israel, even the angel of his presence." And so also Rab. Menahem, upon the 14th of Exod. 19. tells us, that "the angel which went before the camp "of Israel was *shechinah*, the presence, or majesty "of God; and that he is called the angel or prince "of the world, because the government of the world "is in his hands." And to the same purpose Moses the son of Neheman: *Præterea scriptum est*, saith he, *et angelus faciei ejus salvos fecit ipsos*, &c. that is, "It is written, the angel of his presence "shall save them:" viz. that angel which is the presence of God; of whom it is said, *My presence shall go before thee, and I will cause thee to rest.* "Moreover," saith he, "this is that angel of whom "the prophets foretold, *The Lord whom ye seek* "*shall suddenly come to his temple, the angel of* "*the covenant whom ye desire;*" which both the ancient Jews and Christians interpret to be the Messias: and "this," saith he, "is he who governs the "world, that brought the children of Israel out of "Egypt, and to whom the most high God com-

[a] De Agricul. p. 152.

"municates his own name." And this without doubt was he whom God calls *his presence*, when he promised Moses that *his presence should go along with him*, Exod. xxxiii. 14. for this presence is there said to be *the angel of God;* both which put together make him to be the angel of God's presence, Exod. xxiii. 20. And accordingly, instead of, *Say not before the angel of the Lord*, Eccles. v. 6. the Septuagint render it, *Say not before the presence of God*, that is, before *the angel of his presence*. And since to this angel of his presence God doth attribute, not only his prerogative of forgiving sins, but also his own name, as you may see he doth, Exod. xxiii. 21. it seems very probable, what not only the Jews, but many very learned Christians do assert, that it was no created angel, but the eternal Word or Messias: for, saith God to Moses, *Behold, I send an angel before thee*, &c. *Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him;* that is, my name *Jehovah*, which is the proper and incommunicable name of God: and accordingly you frequently read of an angel that is called by the name Jehovah, which I doubt not was the same with this *angel of God's presence*. Thus that angel of the Lord which appeared to Moses in the burning bush is called by the name Jehovah, and styled *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, Exod. iii. 2. comp. iv. 5. And one of those angels that appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre is called *the Lord*, and *the Judge of all the earth*, Gen. xviii. 1, 25. So also he that stood on the top of the ladder in Jacob's vision, is in Gen. xxviii. 13. called *the Lord God of Abraham, and the God of*

Isaac; whereas in Gen. xxxi. 11. he is called *the angel of the Lord;* and afterwards, ver. 13. *the God of Bethel:* which seems to me a plain evidence, that that angel of God was God, since both those titles were attributed to the same person; and that he was also that very angel of his presence whom God promised to send before the camp of Israel, since in him it is apparent the name of God was; i. e. the name Jehovah. And it is very observable, that this very angel both Philo and the Chaldee Paraphrase styles *the Word of God:* and therefore those words of God to Joshua, Jos. i. 5. *As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee,* the Paraphrase renders thus, *As my word was assisting to Moses, so it shall be assisting to thee:* and it is the observation of the learned Masius, that generally where the Hebrew text speaks of God, either conversing with men or managing their affairs, that Paraphrase, instead of *God,* uses this phrase, *the Word of God.* From whence it is evident, that it was the received doctrine of the Jews, that God was always present with mankind by his eternal Word; which is therefore the more considerable, because it so exactly agrees with the doctrine of the primitive fathers. For so Tertullian, *Christus semper egit in Dei Patris nomine; ipse ad initio conversatus est cum patriarchis et prophetis.* And in his book against Praxian he tells us, "That from Adam to "the patriarchs and prophets, Christ always de-"scended to discourse with men;" and "that that "God who conversed upon earth with men, was no "other than that eternal Word that was to be made "flesh." And the same thing is strenuously asserted also by Justin Martyr, in his discourses with Trypho

the Jew. Nor can I see any reason why he should not be *the angel of God's presence*, since elsewhere he is expressly called the angel of that covenant by which God hath obliged himself to be present with his church for ever, Mal. iii. 1. and the New Testament so often declares him to be the image, and character, and representative of God; and himself tells Philip, that he did so perfectly represent the Father, that *whosoever had seen him had seen the Father*, John xiv. 9. And if this be so, as it seems highly probable, that *the Word* was *the angel of God's presence*, that is, the chief or prince of those angels that represented God in the world, then it will follow that the *shechinah*, or majestic presence of God, consisted in a glorious and visible appearance of the Word, with a troop of blessed angels attending him in bright and luminous forms. And this I conceive was the glorious presence of God which came down first upon mount Sinai, and afterwards removed into the tabernacle, and abode between the two cherubims. And this I am rather induced to believe, because I find the descent of God's presence upon mount Sinai is described in the same manner as Christ's coming to judgment; for so, Matth. xvi. 27. it is said, that *he shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels*; and St. Jude tells us, that *he shall come with his holy myriads, or ten thousands*, ver. 14. for so it ought to be rendered: and the Lord in the same manner is said to come from Sinai *with his holy ten thousands, or myriads*; for so it is in the Hebrew, Deut. xxxiii. 2. And since they are both described in the same manner, it seems to follow, that they were both the same majestic presence of God, even the eternal Word as-

suming a glorious form, and attended with myriads of bright and shining angels. And this same presence it was that was afterwards displayed in the tabernacle, which was said to be filled with *the glory of the Lord*, which shone from between the cherubims with a bright and visible splendour; that is, with the illustrious appearances of the eternal Word, and those glorious angels that attended him. And upon that mount and in that tabernacle did this blessed Word represent his Father, even as the viceroy doth the sovereign prince; for there in his Father's person, and by his authority, he gave forth his laws and oracles to the seed of Abraham, and, as the vicegerent of the most high God, governed the house of Israel, and distributed to them rewards and punishments, according as they behaved themselves towards him: for upon all the forenamed reasons it seems highly probable, that he was the Lord who spoke to Moses, and from between the cherubims, and that thence delivered the law to him. So that as he was the shechinah, or glorious presence of the most high God in the tabernacle, he did there represent his person by bearing his authority, and ruling the house of Israel as his substitute and viceroy.

And that the words of my text do refer to this glorious appearance of the Word in the tabernacle, and to his representing of the most high God there, is very evident, in that it is not only said that he tabernacled among them, which evidently alludes to his dwelling in the old tabernacle, but that they saw his glory too; which is a plain allusion to that glory of his which filled the tabernacle. So that the meaning of these words, *he dwelt among us*, seems to be this, That as Christ, who is the eternal Word, was

the shechinah, the divine presence, or angel of God's presence, which in the tabernacle of old represented the Most High to the Jews; so he also abode or tabernacled in our flesh, as the representative of his Father to mankind. In the tabernacle of our flesh he displayed the glory of his Father to us; he openly manifested and represented him to the world, even as of old he was wont to do in the tabernacle of Moses. For, *the Word to tabernacle among us* must necessarily signify more than barely to dwell or live among us; for it must signify to dwell as the shechinah in the tabernacle; that is, as the most glorious presence or representative of the most high God, as one that was vested with the divine authority, and that was the vicegerent of the Father of all things. So that *he dwelt among us* seems to signify the same with, He reigned among us in his Father's stead, as one who bore his authority, and represented his person, and to whom for the future we were to pay the same homage and reverence that we were bound to render to the Most High himself, who under himself hath authorized him to be our Prince and Governor, to declare his divine will to us, and exact our obedience thereunto, by rewarding and punishing us according to the tenour of those laws which he hath established in his blessed gospel; for this is plainly implied in his shechanizing or tabernacling, viz. his being the glorious representative of God in the world. He tabernacled among us; that is, he acted in God's stead, as one that represented his Father; and this he did in our flesh in a far more glorious manner than ever he did in the Mosaic tabernacle: for in our flesh and nature he

tabernacled *full of grace and truth.* Which brings me to the next inquiry, viz.

2. What is here meant by his *dwelling among us full of grace and truth?* By these two phrases, the design of the holy penman is doubtless to distinguish the manner of his dwelling among us from that of his dwelling among the Jews in the tabernacle: for a little after he uses the same phrases in contradistinction to the law of Moses: *The law,* saith he, *was given by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ,* ver. 17. God the eternal Word gave the law to Moses, and Moses gave it to the people of Israel; but Jesus Christ, that is, the eternal Word incarnate, gave not the law, but *grace and truth.* So in the text, the Word incarnate, or tabernacled in our flesh, did shechanize, or perform the part of his Father's supreme representative among us *full of grace and truth:* which implies something beyond what he did when he dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses, and there as the viceroy of God reigned over the house of Jacob. That I may therefore more fully explain this matter to you, I will briefly consider these two phrases apart, and shew you in what particulars they each of them distinguish his dwelling among us from his dwelling in the Mosaic tabernacle.

1. He dwelt among us *full of grace,* which distinguishes his dwelling among us from that more severe and rigorous manner in the former tabernacle; and that in these following particulars:

1st, He dwelt among us *full of grace,* in respect of the sweetness and obligingness of his behaviour, in contradistinction to that more dreadful and terri-

ble manner of his conversing with the Jews, when he tabernacled among them. The Jews being a most stubborn and stiffnecked generation, (as they are often called in the Old Testament,) the eternal Word thought fit to converse among them in such a way as was most suitable to their genius and temper, to break their stubbornness with the dread of his power, and awe them with the terror of his majesty. And accordingly you find, that when he came down first upon mount Sinai, he was attended with a loud sounding trumpet, with thunders and lightnings, with fire and smoke, and all the equipage of a most dreadful majesty, such as caused the mountain and the people to tremble, Exod. xix. 16, 20. And afterwards it is said, that the glory in which he appeared, when the people saw him upon the mount, was like a devouring fire; in which glorious appearance he afterwards removed into the tabernacle, and there abode between the cherubims, Exod. xl. 34, 35. And when in all this dreadful majesty he appeared unto them, they were kept at a great distance from him, and were severely forbid to approach him, lest he should *break forth upon them, and destroy them*, Exod. xix. 24. And whenever they provoked him by their murmurings and rebellions, his wrath broke forth like lightning upon them, and consumed the ringleading rebels, that by their example the rest might be warned to do no more wickedly. Thus in all his converses with them, he clothed himself in a formidable majesty, to break and awe their sturdy spirits, and force their stiff necks to yield to the yoke of his sovereign authority. But when he assumed our nature, and tabernacled among us in our flesh, he laid by that astonishing majesty that was

wont to render him so dreadful to the Israelites, and put on all the condescensions and sweetnesses of a most familiar and endearing conversation, and conversed amongst men in such a generous, friendly, and courteous manner, as was most apt to charm and enamour the world. He was free without being vain or trifling, serious without being sour and morose; his humour always cheerful and uniform, and his gravity was equally distant from moroseness and vanity; and, in a word, his deportment was made up of all the accomplishments that can command either love or honour. And though now and then he falls into high expressions of indignation, yet it was only against those base fellows the Pharisees, who, under a pretence of being saints, and the godly party, were bloated up with pride and arrogance, and cankered with malice and ill-nature; for which they were so abominable in his eyes, whose temper was altogether so loving and divine, that he could not mention them without calling them *hypocrites* and *the children of the Devil.* And if to all this you add his profound humility and condescension, his meekness under reproaches, and his constancy and patience under the greatest sufferings, how much more sweet, grateful, and charming was this, than when he appeared in such a dreadful and astonishing majesty upon mount Sinai, and in the tabernacle of Moses! It is true, the innocency and purity of his life, the divinity of his doctrine, and the many mighty miracles that he wrought, could not but imprint an awful majesty upon his person: but yet it was a graceful majesty, a majesty full of grace and sweetness, and such as was much more apt to endear than to affright men. For, as for the

virtue of his life, and the divinity of his doctrine, it could not but attract all those who had any love and esteem for virtue and goodness. And as for his miracles, they were vastly different from those which he wrought in the wilderness, which had little else in them but matter of terror and astonishment: but these were all such as did express his kindness to the world, and so were much more apt to oblige than to terrify those that beheld them: *for he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the Devil*, Acts x. 38. and *healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people*, Matt. iv. 23. So that in respect of the sweetness and obligingness of his conversation, he tabernacled among us *full of grace*, in contradistinction to that terrible majesty in which he tabernacled among the Jews.

2dly, He tabernacled among us *full of grace*, in regard of the sweetness and gentleness of his laws, in contradistinction to those many burdensome precepts which he gave when he tabernacled among the Jews. It is apparent, by the history of that people, that they were obstinately addicted to the customs of Egypt, from whence they were brought, and of the neighbouring nations round about them; and thence it was that notwithstanding those manifest discoveries that God had made of himself to them, and of his being the only true God, such as one would have thought had been sufficient to have convinced the most obstinate gainsayers; yet ever and anon we find them starting aside to the idolatrous customs of the Gentiles, and revolting from that God who had so gloriously manifested himself among them. The eternal Word, therefore, when he came

to tabernacle among them, gave them abundance of laws, the matter of which was in its own nature perfectly indifferent, that by those, as by so many bounds and fences, he might keep them from breaking out of God's enclosure into the wild common of Gentilism; and such were the greatest part of their ceremonial laws, some of which were instituted in compliance with the more innocent rites of the heathen, and others in opposition to those which were purely magical and idolatrous. And hence it is, that in the law of their ceremonies there are so many things enjoined them of which we can give no tolerable account, they being either innocent customs, derived from the heathens in compliance with the Jews, or prohibitions of those magical and idolatrous customs in which the Jews had been educated in Egypt, and to which they were always very prone and inclinable. So that merely to comply with the Jews in what was innocent, and restrain them in what was hurtful and idolatrous, the eternal Word was fain to impose a vast number of positive laws upon them, which contained nothing but what was purely indifferent, and might have been done or undone, without any prejudice to the eternal rules of goodness. And accordingly, Ezek. xx. 24, 25. it is said, that *because their eyes were after their fathers' idols, therefore God gave them statutes that were not good*, that is, had no intrinsic goodness in them, and *judgments whereby they should not live.* And that God imposed these things, not as good in themselves, but as accommodated to the present state and temper of the Israelites, is evident from what the Psalmist says, Psalm li. 16. *Thou desirest not sacrifice—thou delightest not in burnt-offerings;*

though it is evident he had a further end in imposing very many of these sacred rites, namely, to shadow out by them the mysteries of the gospel, and give them some preludious hints of that glorious kingdom of Christ that was afterwards to be established in the world. But by this means the Jewish law was multiplied into so many precepts, and those many of them so expensive and burdensome, that the apostle calls it *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*, Acts xv.10. and elsewhere, *a yoke of bondage*, Gal. v. 1. Thus, while the eternal Word tabernacled among the Jews, his laws were very rigid and cumbersome, being clogged with so vast a number of positive rites and observances: but when he came to tabernacle in our flesh, he abolished all these numerous ceremonies, and imposed nothing upon the world but what is sweet, and easy, and *full of grace*. And hence himself tells us, Matt. xi. 30. ὁ ζυγός μου χρηστὸς, *my yoke is gracious*, (for so it is in the Greek,) *and my burden is light;* for it imposes nothing upon us but what is most agreeable to our rational natures, nothing but what we ourselves, if we were wise and good, should reckon ourselves obliged to, though he had never enjoined it. For all the duty he requires of us results immediately from the frame of our natures, and the unalterable relations we stand in to God and the world. For the sum of all Christian duty is contained in those three generals, *to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world;* and these must necessarily oblige us so long as we carry such beings about us, and continue in such relations. Whilst God is our God and Creator, we cannot be disobliged from living godly; that is, from honouring

and loving him, from fearing and trusting in him, from serving and adoring him: for unless we could destroy our relation to him, and cease to be his creatures, the dueness of these acts of homage and worship from us to him must necessarily abide for ever. Whilst we continue to be reasonable animals, we cannot be freed from the obligation of sobriety, which consists in governing our passions and appetites by our reason: for till we can lay by our reason, which is the superior principle of our nature, and step into another form of beings, it will be always fit that our inferior powers should be subject to its conduct and government. Whilst we continue in the society of men, and are members of the body of mankind, we cannot be released from the ties of righteousness, which contains in it charity, and all other sociable virtues: and till we cease to be related to mankind, it can never cease to be reasonable for us to do what becomes our relation; that is, to be just, benign, and charitable to one another. So that all that the Word incarnate hath enjoined us, is to do what we ourselves must needs acknowledge is most just and reasonable, and what we should choose to do before any thing in the world, were we not prejudiced against it by our own base lusts and unreasonable passions. So that in respect of those gracious laws he gave us whilst he dwelt among us, he may well be said to dwell among us *full of grace*.

3dly, He dwelt among us *full of grace*, in respect of that full pardon and remission which he hath granted to sinners in his gospel, in contradistinction to that partial and incomplete pardon which he gave when he tabernacled among the Jews. For whilst the eternal Word, as his Father's representative,

reigned over the nation of Israel, he gave no other pardon but temporal by the law of Moses, which was the rule and instrument of his government. And I am sure, that, from the 20th of Exodus to the 27th of Deuteronomy, in which compass that whole law is comprised, there is not the least mention of any other pardon or forgiveness allowed to offenders, but only what respects their temporal punishment; nay, in some cases this was not allowed, as particularly in the cases of blasphemy, idolatry, and murder, no, not though they heartily repented of it. For all that pardon which the Mosaic law allowed was indulged to them upon their offering up propitiatory sacrifices, which in these exempted cases were not allowed of; but yet the apostle tells us of all these sacrifices in general, that *the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin*, Heb. x. 4. that *they did sanctify only to the purifying of the flesh*, Heb. vii. 13. that *they could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*, Heb. ix. 9. that is, that they only released offenders from the obligation to civil and ecclesiastical punishments, but could by no means free them from the eternal punishments of the other life. Not that I make the least doubt but that truly penitent offenders were forgiven the eternal punishment then as well as now, and forgiven too for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Lamb that was intentionally slain from the beginning of the world; but by what hath been said, it is plain they were not forgiven by virtue of that law whereby the eternal Word reigned over the house of Israel, but rather by virtue of that gospel which was first preached to Adam, and afterwards to the patriarchs; wherein Christ, *the seed of the*

woman, and *the seed of Abraham*, is promised, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed. It is true, the sacrifices of the law were typical of the sacrifice of Christ, and so consequently was that temporal pardon obtained by them, typical of that eternal pardon which we do obtain by the great propitiation of our Saviour; for so the apostle tells us, that *the law had in it a shadow of good things to come*, Heb. x. 1. But we must not imagine that eternal remission, which is the effect of Christ's real sacrifice, could ever be obtained by those sacrifices which were only the shadows and resemblances of it. So that that remission of sins which the eternal Word gave whilst he tabernacled among the Jews, was nothing near so perfect and complete as that which he afterwards proclaimed in the tabernacle of our flesh, because it neither extended to all kinds of sins, nor yet to all kinds of punishment; it left some unforgiven as to the punishments of this life, and it left all unforgiven as to the punishments of the life to come. But having pitched his tabernacle in our flesh, he did by the meritorious sacrifice of himself obtain of his Father this public act of grace, this free charter of mercy for all mankind; That whosoever would repent and amend, whatsoever sins he is guilty of, whatsoever punishments he is obliged to, he shall certainly be forgiven them all, and be as freely received into God's grace and favour, as if he never had offended him; for *he is the propitiation for the sins of the world: And by him*, saith the apostle, *all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*, Acts xiii. 39. In this respect, therefore, the eternal Word dwelt among us *full of grace*,

in that he proclaimed such a full and perfect pardon of all sins, and of all punishments, to all that with a true faith and hearty repentance should turn unto him; and accordingly this pardon is frequently called by the name of *grace*, or of *the grace of God*, and *of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xv. 11. Heb. xii. 15. and Rom. iii. 24.

4thly, He dwelt among us *full of grace*, in respect of the internal grace and assistance which he so abundantly afforded us above what he did to the Jews, under the law of Moses, when he tabernacled among them. I make no doubt but God in all ages hath been always ready to assist good men in their duty. This the very heathens themselves believed, that χωρὶς δαίμονος οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς, "that God did concur "with all good men, and that no man did ever ar-"rive to any eminent degree of virtue, without a di-"vine *afflatus*, or assistance." And had the good men among the Jews been ignorant of this, what should move them to pray, as we find they often do, that God would wash and cleanse, and quicken and strengthen, and enliven them? For so, in the book of the Psalms, you find good David very often praying that God would *teach him his commandments, and incline his heart to keep them, and keep him back from presumptuous sin*. By which prayers it is evident they had good encouragement to hope that God would be ready to concur with them, and to bless their pious endeavours with the internal assistance of his grace and Spirit. And this encouragement I suppose they might have partly from their natural notions of God, which must needs suggest to them, that he, being infinitely good as he is, will never be wanting to his creatures in any thing that

is necessary to the obtaining those noble ends for which he created them, and consequently that he will be assistant to them in their duty, which is the way to that end, and not leave them to contend with difficulties which are insuperable to their natural power and ability; and partly from those general evangelical promises which God made to them by the patriarchs and prophets, from whence they might fairly infer, that he who had promised to do so much for them, upon condition they persisted in their duty and allegiance to him, would never be wanting on his part to strengthen and enable them to it. But I can by no means allow that they were encouraged to hope for any such assistance from any promise of that law which the eternal Word gave them when he tabernacled among them, and by which, in his Father's stead, he ruled and governed them; and that both because there is no such promise found in all that law, and because the apostle tells us, that *the law was weak through the flesh*, Rom. viii. 3. and calls it *the ministration of death written and engraven in stones*, in opposition to *the ministration of the Spirit, that is not written in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart*, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8. compared with verse 3. And, Gal. iii. 13, 14. you find the apostle opposes to the *curse of the law* the *blessing of Abraham*, and the *blessing of Abraham* he tells us is *the promise of the Spirit through faith*, that is, by the gospel. And thus, under the law, there was doubtless an internal grace and assistance vouchsafed to good men, though not promised by it; yet after the eternal Word forsook the tabernacle of Moses, and came to tabernacle in our flesh, it is evident that then he did more

plentifully communicate this his grace to the world than ever; for then the Spirit was said to be shed upon us abundantly through *Jesus Christ our Lord*; and in the 16th verse of this 1st of John, we are said *of his fulness to receive* χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος, *grace upon grace;* that is, grace heaped upon grace, and a vast overflowing abundance; according to that of Theognis, Δοίης τ' ἀντ' ἀνιῶν ἀνίας, that is, "Thou givest "me calamities upon calamities." So that unless we will ourselves, it is now impossible we should fall short either of our duty or the blessed reward of it, since our Saviour is become such an overflowing fountain of grace to us, and hath promised to communicate it to us in such plentiful effusions, if we will sincerely ask and honestly endeavour after it; and therefore in this respect also he may well be said *to dwell among us full of grace*, in that while he dwelt among us he obtained for, and promised to us such an accumulated plenty of inward grace and assistance, to encourage and enable us to do his commandments.

5thly, He dwelt among us *full of grace*, in respect of the vastness of the recompense which he promised to us, and which infinitely exceeds whatsoever he promised when he dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses. For when the eternal Word reigned over Israel as the viceroy and substitute of his Father, he only acted the part of their civil sovereign or governor; which part he continued till they chose another king, and then he resigned his title to the succeeding heirs of David. And accordingly we find, that when the Israelites first desired a king of Samuel, God bids him hearken to their cry; *For*, saith he, *they have not rejected thee, but they have re-*

jected me, that I should not reign over them, 1 Sam. viii. 7. which is a plain argument, that before he only acted as their political prince, in that he interprets their desiring another king, to be a rejecting of him from reigning over them. For had he been no otherwise king over Israel, than as he is over other nations where the true religion is owned and professed, his dominion might have fairly consisted with that of another king or sovereign; and it would have been no more a rejecting God's rule for Israel to desire a king, than it is for France, or Spain, or England. For it is plain the Israelites did not reject God's divine dominion, which he claims over the world as the Omnipotent Creator of all things; for then their desire of a king had been idolatry, and the kings whom they desired had been idols, or false gods. It is plain, therefore, that it was his political dominion only which they rejected by desiring another king to reign in his stead; which he interprets as their intention to rob and divest him of that civil authority which till then he had claimed and exercised among them. So that the plain sense of their desire was this; God shall no longer be our civil sovereign, but for the future we are resolved to have a king from among ourselves, even as other nations round about us, whom we will invest with the same civil authority which hitherto he hath challenged and exercised among us. God the eternal Word therefore being their civil prince or ruler, as such he gave them the Mosaic law, which he only designed to be the rule or instrument of his civil government and dominion; which is the reason why in that law he only promised civil or temporal blessings, because it was

only a law of civil government, and as such could design no further than the civil or temporal happiness of those who were to be ruled and governed by it. And accordingly, if you peruse the promises of that law, you will find that they all consist of outward and temporal blessings; such as health of body, and victory over their enemies; peace among themselves and with their neighbouring nations; plenty of bread, and the conveniences of life; and success and prosperity in all their affairs: and therefore the author to the Hebrews calls the gospel *the bringing in of a better hope*, and upon this account opposes it to the law of Moses, Heb. vii. 19. which plainly implies that that law brought in no better hope than that of a temporal happiness; and those words of the apostle, Gal. iii. 12. *The law is not of faith, but, The man that doeth them shall live in them*, do plainly seem to imply this sense. The law proposing only present and sensible blessings to such as do it, such as that Thou shalt live a happy and prosperous life in this world, doth not require faith, properly so called, which is *the evidence of things not seen;* that is, of the invisible blessings of the other life: and ver. 21. he plainly asserts, that if there had been any other law besides the gospel that could have given that promised life, *righteousness would have been by that law;* and therefore since, as he asserts, righteousness was by no other law but the gospel, it follows that no other law, no not that of Moses, could give or promise life eternal. Not that I make the least doubt but good men under the law of Moses did firmly believe a future happiness; for this the very heathens themselves had very great hopes and expectations of, though they never

had so much reason as the Jews to induce them to believe: for, besides all those weighty arguments which were common to them with the heathens, they had those general evangelical promises which God made to the patriarchs of *being their God*, and *their exceeding great reward;* the histories of the translations of Enoch and Elijah, and of sundry most eminent examples of God's exceeding love to goodness and good men; from whence they might easily infer, that sure he had better rewards in store for them than any of the transitory blessings of this life, especially when they saw how many good men were deprived of these, and left naked and destitute of all worldly comforts. Besides all which, in every age they had prophets that were divinely inspired; and who, among all the secrets that were revealed to them, cannot be supposed to have been wholly unacquainted with the typical meaning of their ceremonies and polity, which among other things presignified the glorious recompenses of the life to come. But however they came by it, I think it is very apparent, from sundry passages in the Book of Psalms, Ezekiel, and Daniel, that they were far from being strangers to the doctrine of a blessed immortality hereafter; though I think it is very apparent, from what hath been said, that they did not derive their belief of this doctrine from any express promise of their law. But yet it is very apparent, that though they were not altogether unacquainted with it, yet it was never so clearly discovered to them by the eternal Word, as it was afterwards to us by the Word incarnate, since, as the apostle tells us, *he brought life and immortality to light by the gospel:* for therein he hath most clearly promised it to us,

and, as far as human language can express, explained and unfolded its nature; and by his own resurrection, and ascension into heaven, hath given us a clear and visible demonstration of its truth and reality: so that now the existence of it is become as certain to us, as it is possible for a matter of fact to be; and we cannot be more infallibly assured of it than we are, unless we had been personally in heaven, and had there surveyed its glories with our own eyes. Well therefore may he be said to have dwelt among us *full of grace*, since he was graciously pleased to make us such express promises of future happiness, and give us such ample assurance of its reality and existence. And so I have done with the first note of distinction between Christ's dwelling among us, and his dwelling in the Mosaic tabernacle: he dwelt among us *full of grace*.

2. The other character by which his dwelling among us is distinguished from his dwelling in the Mosaic tabernacle, is this, that he dwelt among us *full of truth*. It is plain, that *truth* here is not to be understood as opposed to *falsehood*; because in that sense it is no note of distinction between these two dwellings or tabernaclings of Christ, unless we suppose that he did falsely dwell, or act, and represent God in the tabernacle of Moses, which would be to blaspheme his truth and veracity. *Truth*, therefore, must here be understood as opposed to *obscurity* and *shadow*, and so must denote *clearness* and *reality*, as it very commonly doth. As when we say a picture is not a true man, we do not charge the picture with a lie: if it could speak indeed, and should call itself a man, we should then say it were a lying picture for pretending to be what it is not,

being only a silent resemblance of him. Thus when the apostle saith, *He dwelt among us full of truth*, and thereby distinguishes his tabernacling among us from the manner of his dwelling among the Jews, it is not so to be understood as if he had dwelt among them in a false or lying manner, or that that representation which he made to them of God and divine things were false and imposturous; no, God forbid: but thus, whereas when he inhabited the tabernacle he was full of hieroglyphics, or mystical representations, which though they were true pictures or shadows of divine things, yet have not the truth and reality of the things themselves in them, and consequently would be lies and cheats, should they pretend to be what they only represent; but now he is come to dwell among us, he is full of the things themselves, of those realities which formerly he only gave us the types and shadows of; now he hath removed all that scene of pictures and mystical representations, and brought the things themselves upon the stage, and exposed them naked to the view of the world: so that now he doth not entertain us, as heretofore he did the Jews, with emblems and shadows, but with truth, and the real substances of things. And thus the word is very frequently taken in the New Testament: thus, Heb. viii. 2. the Christian church is called *the true tabernacle*, in contradistinction to *the tabernacle of Moses;* not as if that were a false tabernacle, but a typical one, it being designed only as a shadow of the Christian church, which is the true reality and substance which was pictured and represented in it; for so the apostle himself explains it, Heb. ix. 24. *For Christ*, saith he, *is not entered into the holy places made with*

hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself: from whence it is plain, that therefore those *holy places* are opposed to *true places*, because they were only figures, or mystical representations of something that is real and substantial. So, Dan. vii. 16. when Daniel desired to know the truth of that prophetic scene, it is said, that *one stood by, and made him know the interpretation of the things;* that is, what was the reality and substance that was represented in those types and figures. So here, *He dwelt among us full of truth;* that is, When he dwelt among us he was full of the substance and reality of those things which before he was wont to represent by obscure emblems and shadows; now he presents to us the things themselves, and not the mystical types and figures of them, as formerly he was wont to do. For I think it is very evident, that the whole model of the Jewish polity was purposely contrived to be an emblem and representation of the gospel; and that the main reason of those numerous rites and ceremonies was to delineate and shadow out the glorious mysteries of Christianity: for the apostle plainly tells us, that they were all a *shadow of things to come*, and that *the body*, or substance of that shadow, *was Jesus Christ*, Col. ii. 17. And the author to the Hebrews calls them *the patterns of the things in heaven*, or *the heavenly things;* by which it is plain he means Christ, or the subjects of the kingdom of Christ, since he tells us, that as it was necessary that those patterns should be purified with blood, so it was necessary that those heavenly things represented by them should be purified by a *better sacrifice*, Heb. ix. 23. And what other heavenly things are

there but only Christians, that are purified with this *better sacrifice* of Christ? And in another place the same author tells us, that *the law hath in it a shadow of good things to come*, Heb. x. 1. And thus very frequently in the New Testament, the sacred rites of the Mosaic law are declared to be types and shadows of the mysteries of the gospel, as particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is almost wholly spent upon this argument. And this the Jews themselves seem to be acquainted with long before the publication of the gospel; for so the most ancient Jews looked upon the temple as a type and figure of the heavenly state; and Philo the Jew, in his *Allegories of the Law*, and almost in all his other writings, makes the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law to be types and figures of some divine or moral truth, and particularly the high priest to be an emblem of the eternal Word, and his crown and vestments to be representations of his authority and divine perfections; wherein he exactly agrees with the author to the Hebrews. And from sundry passages in the Book of Psalms it seems evident, that the good Jews had a prospect beyond the outside and letter of the law, even into the typical sense and meaning of it; and that through its glimmering shadows and resemblances, they beheld very much of the substance and realities of the gospel: for hence probably was that of David, Psalm xxv. 14. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;* for certainly by *the secret of the Lord* here cannot be meant the foreknowledge of future events, since under the Old Testament that was neither restrained to good men, nor much less was it universally with them that feared God; and therefore it seems more

probable, that by it we are to understand those then secret mysteries of the gospel, which were so obscurely represented in the types and figures of the law; especially if we compare this with that prayer of David, Psalm cxix. 18. *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;* which methinks plainly intimates, that the good man did believe there were some wondrous mysteries contained under those dark and typical representations: and afterwards, ver. 27. *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts, so shall I talk of thy wondrous works;* which implies, that he believed that there were some things very mystical, and hard to be understood, contained within the precepts of their law, which in their literal sense were easy and obvious, and had nothing of depths or mystery in them; and therefore certainly, had he not seen something within them beyond their rind and outside, he would never have prayed so earnestly as he doth, *that God would teach him his laws*, and that *he would not hide from him his commandments*, as he doth, ver. 19. much less would he have imagined, that by *understanding of them he should be enabled to talk of such wondrous things.* Afterwards, ver. 69. he tells us, that *he had seen an end of all perfection, but God's commandments are exceeding broad;* which denotes, that he who had seen an end of all things else, had discovered so vast and boundless a depth in the commands of God, that he could see no end of it: whereas it is plain, that the literal meaning of them was very narrow and contracted, and far from being so exceeding broad; which argues, that the good man had discovered under the letter and surface of them, a mine of mys-

tical sense which he could not reach the bottom of, and that God had given him a glimpse of those glorious secrets of the gospel, which he had wrapped up and involved in the typical precepts of the law. Thus the eternal Word, while he tabernacled among the Jews, revealed his gospel to them by types, and shadows, and mystical representations of it; which, though it was very obscure and imperfect, yet seems to have been the best and clearest that the present state of that people could admit of. For it seems plain, by the history of the Jews, that they were naturally a very rude and untractable people, and doubtless they were never worse than when they came out of the land of Egypt, where their bad temper was doubtless very much improved by those gross idolatries in which they had been educated; so that being bad themselves, and also extremely debauched by the wicked manners of the Egyptians, it is not to be supposed that they were subjects capable of the heights and purities of religion: for if from the depth of immorality, whereinto they were sunk, God should have immediately strained them up to the highest pitch of gospel purity, in all probability they would never have borne it; but like the strings of a musical instrument, being wound too high, would have been apt to crack and fly in pieces, and wholly to revolt from God into those gross idolatries which yet they were hardly weaned from, and which were still so suitable to their genius and temper. So that as yet there was so great a gulf between them and the gospel, that it was hardly possible either for them to go to that, or for that to come to them. And therefore as God in his own high wisdom hath placed a twilight between the

night and the morning to secure our sight, lest our weak eyes should be dazzled by a too sudden irruption of the broad day's glory, so did he deal with the Jews: he thought it not convenient immediately to post them out of utter darkness into perfect light, but first interposes a less pure religion as a medium or twilight between the heathen and the gospel state, that so by that he might prepare their sight for the reception of a more perfect splendour, and make them fit to entertain the severer purities of the gospel without being offended or dazzled with its glory. But yet in wisdom he hath so contrived and modelled this less perfect religion, as to make it most instructive and useful; having so ordered its sacred rites and ceremonies, as to make them representative of the whole method and economy of the gospel: and though those typical representations were very obscure and dark, so that the gospel seemed to run under ground in the midst of those ceremonial observances, yet it frequently broke forth, and opened itself in the midst of them, and by degrees in the prophetic age did make it a larger channel, till by its force and violence it did overthrow these banks that stood in its way, and overspread the face of the whole earth. So that it is plain, that the obscurity of those typical representations did not render them wholly useless, since they were not so obscure, but those who were good, and diligent, and serious in the study of them, might be and were instructed by them in whatsoever was necessary to make them good and happy. For though those types had not a mouth to speak out the gospel, yet they had a hand to point to it, they being as it were rude drafts of that which was afterwards to be drawn to

the greatest life and exactness; and this it is plain was understood by all good men, whose hearts were carried beyond the outward letter of the law, to the more inward and spiritual meaning of it; wherein they discovered those evangelical mysteries that were vailed and hidden under the outward ceremonies, which made up that true spiritual cabala which seems constantly to have been preserved among the true Israelites, and which afterwards was more largely commented on by the prophets of the succeeding ages, whose care it was to unlock this cabala, or spiritual sense of the law, and to raise up the hearts of that people to a higher expectation of the great things which were to come. So that you see the state and condition of the Jews would not admit of a plain discovery of the gospel to them, but required an outward ceremonial religion, that being most accommodate to their genius and temper; and therefore, though the eternal Word for the present exigence established such a religion among them, yet he wisely framed and modelled it into a typical representation of the gospel, that so thereby he might prepare them for it, and so far instruct them in the knowledge of it as was necessary to their welfare and happiness. And hence the apostle tells the Jews, that *the law was their schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ*, that they might be justified by faith; and that now, *after faith was come*, they were *no longer under their schoolmaster*, Gal. iii. 24, 25. that is, while they were in their infantine, childish state, and incapable of a more perfect institution, God set the law as a schoolmaster over them, that that, by its types, and pictures, and emblems, might gradually instruct them in the mysteries of Christ

and the gospel, that so when it was openly revealed, they might be justified by the belief of it; and therefore now since the gospel was come, they were no longer under the tutorage of that schoolmaster, now they were no longer to learn Christ by types and mystical representations, since he himself was present with them, and had openly revealed those divine mysteries, which, under those types, were so obscurely adumbrated. So that you see the eternal Word tabernacled among the Jews in a far different manner from what he did when he pitched his tabernacle in our natures; for when he tabernacled among them he was full of types, and shadows, and mystical emblems; he instructed them in divine things by symbols and obscure representations; but when he came to tabernacle among us and our natures, he was *full of truth*; that is, of substance and reality: for then, instead of the shadows and pictures of them, he exhibited to us the things themselves; then he brought down the mysteries of the gospel, out of that cloud of types in which they were before involved, and set them before us in a clear and open light.

But that I may more fully demonstrate this to you, I shall briefly give you some particular instances of his dwelling or conversing among us *full of truth*, in contradistinction to that obscure typical way of his conversing or tabernacling among the Jews; which I shall rank under these four heads:

1. His personal transactions.
2. The purity and spirituality of his laws.
3. The condition and quality of his kingdom.
4. The rewards and recompenses which he promises to his subjects.

1. One great instance of his conversing among us

full of truth, in contradistinction to that obscure and typical way of his conversing among the Jews, is his own personal transactions. The eternal Word being to assume our natures, thought fit to give the Jews, whilst he tabernacled among them, a specimen or pattern of those glorious things he was to transact in his incarnate state; and this he did chiefly by the high priest, and those expiatory sacrifices which he ordained and instituted among them, as you may find it demonstrated at large in the epistle to the Hebrews. For as to the high priest, he was *to be called and ordained of God*, Heb. v. 4. in which the eternal Word represented to them his commission from the Father to descend into the world as his ambassador to men. 2dly, He was to be born of a woman that came a pure virgin into the arms of his father, Levit. xxi. 14. in which he seems to represent to them his own pure nativity of a virgin-mother. 3dly, He was to be washed with water, and his flesh and loins were to be covered with the whitest and the cleanest linen, Exod. xxix. 7. and xxviii. 42. by which Christ typified to them the *immaculate* sanctity and innocence of his human life. 4thly, He was to be clothed in the most glorious garments that could possibly be made by the most excellent workmen, Exod. xxviii. 2, 3. which seems to denote the majesty of Christ's person, and those glorious works by which he rendered himself so illustrious in the world. 5thly, The colours of the embroideries of his garment being blue, purple, scarlet, and white, seem to denote the truth of his prophetic office, the majesty of his royal, the perfection of his priestly, and his innocence and sanctity in the execution of them all. 6thly, He wore a holy crown on his head, and

a plate on his forehead engraven with holiness; which denotes the divine authority of Christ, and the sacredness and divinity of his person. And, 7thly, upon his breast he wore the Urim and Thummim, in which was prefigured the height and purity of Christ's doctrine, and the holiness and perfection of his laws. In a word, the high priest was to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people, on the *great day of expiation*, which sacrifice was to be a *beast without blemish* voluntarily presented at the door of the tabernacle; whither the high priest being come, he was to strip off his glorious garment, to lay his hand on the head of the beast, and to confess the people's sins over it, and then to slay the beast, and carry some of the blood of it within the vail, and sprinkle it upon and before the mercy-seat, by which he is said to make an atonement for their sins; that is, to obtain authority from God to bless and pardon: in which the eternal Word gives us a plain representation of his future sacrifice upon earth, and intercession in heaven; for he being both our sacrifice and High Priest, did freely divest himself of the glory and dignity of his human nature, and offer up himself to die for us; by which he laid his hand, as it were, upon his own spotless and immaculate head, did, as our representative, acknowledge what we had deserved, that for our sins we have justly merited to die for ever by the hand of God, even as he for our sakes did submit to die by the hand of man: and having performed this bloody sacrifice, he enters into heaven, which is the true holy of holies; and there, by the oblation of his blood and obedience, makes an atonement for our sins, and obtains authority from his Father to pardon and receive into favour every

truly penitent offender in the world. Thus you see how the personal transactions of our Saviour were under the law of Moses represented in mystical types and figures; but when he came to tabernacle among us, he did all that which before he only represented: he actually came down from the Father to us, was born of the holy virgin, lived a most holy and innocent life, died a sacrifice for our sins, and is gone into heaven to intercede for us: so that now, instead of types and figures, we have the substances and realities that were obscurely shadowed and represented in them.

2. Another great instance of his conversing among us *full of truth*, is the purity and spirituality of his laws. It is apparent that those which he gave to the Jews, according to the literal sense of them, did only oblige them to an external obedience; and therefore St. Paul calls the whole law a *carnal commandment*, Heb. vii. 16. and the precepts of it he calls *carnal ordinances imposed upon them till the time of reformation*, Heb. ix. 10. But yet it is apparent, that by these carnal ordinances the eternal Word did designedly typify and represent that internal purity of soul which the evangelical law doth exact: for he seeing that the Jews were not only a perverse, but also a dull and sottish people, as those generally are who are born and bred in slavery, and that therefore they were incapable of sublime and spiritual precepts, and would be apt to forget plain ones, he therefore thought it most proper and suitable to their capacity and genius, to instruct them by sensible and material signs, even as parents do sometimes teach their children by pictures; for of this his condescension to their dulness and capacity the prophet Isaiah takes

notice, chap. xxviii. 10, 11. where he saith, that he gave them *precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little, with a stammering tongue;* that is, he looked upon them as children, and so condescended to their weakness, and spoke to them in their own dialect. And this way of instructing them by outward and visible signs was the most probable to take effect, because it was much in use in the eastern countries, but more especially in Egypt, whose manners they were infinitely fond of, to wrap up their most excellent precepts in hieroglyphics, which were nothing but pictures and material signs, by which they represented their divine and moral institutions. Thus therefore by such visible signs and pictures, the eternal Word instructed them in the rules of internal purity and goodness; so by circumcision he signified to them the circumcision of their hearts; and by their several washings, purity from hypocrisy and sensuality; yea this was probably the intent of that difference of meats, as St. Barnabas in his epistle tells us, that swine's flesh was pronounced unclean, to instruct them not to live like hogs that clamour when they are hungry, and forget their masters when they are full; that eagles, and such ravenous birds, were forbidden to be eat, to teach them that those who live not by industry, but rapine, are abominable; that fish without scales, which generally dwell in the mud, were all pronounced unclean; to teach them the evil of sensuality and earthly-mindedness. Thus by these outward signs, his intent was to insinuate into them internal purity of mind; and this was very well understood by those who were good and wise among them: hence we find David gives very high encomiums of the law, Psalm xix. 7, 8.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, making wise the simple; rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes, &c. which characters are proper only to that inward and spiritual sense of the law that was deciphered upon those outward signs and ceremonies: which sense seems to have been very little taken notice of by the sottish vulgar; for only the ceremony itself was matter of law to them, which if they observed, they were not punishable by that law, though they never took notice of its spiritual sense and meaning, which made them neglect that inward purity which was pictured on those outward signs, and place the whole of their righteousness in an outside ceremonious pageantry. Hence is that of St. Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14. *I used,* saith he, *great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look unto the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ:* by *which vail* he means those outward shadows and types in which the mystical sense of the law was wrapped and involved; and it seems they were so taken with the pomp and gayety of the outside, that they never minded that rich treasure of sense that was contained within it, and which the apostle here calls *the end of that which is abolished;* yea, *to this day,* saith he, the vail of outward ceremonies stands so much in their light, that they cannot discern the internal sense of the Old Testament; but now, saith he, it is *done away by Christ.* Now that the eternal Word hath pitched his tabernacle in our nature, those outward

types wherein this inward purity of soul was so obscurely intimated, are vanished like clouds before the sun, and in their room are introduced the most pure and spiritual laws of the gospel, which are no longer couched in types and ceremonial shadows, but in plain and naked propositions. Now internal holiness is palpably declared to be the great design of religion, that we should *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.* This therefore is another instance of Christ's tabernacling among us *full of truth*, viz. the purity and spirituality of his laws, which heretofore he mystically represented to the Jews by outward rites and ceremonies.

3. Another instance of his tabernacling among us *full of truth*, in contradistinction to that obscure typical way of his conversing among the Jews, is the condition and quality of his church and kingdom. The eternal Word, designing to erect a glorious kingdom in the world, drew as it were a rude scheme or draught of it in the form and model of the Jewish polity. For first he erects a kingdom among them of which himself was king, to typify that spiritual kingdom which afterwards he meant to establish in the world; then he adopts the Jews to be his children by the external sign of circumcision, who are therefore called a *holy seed*, which was an emblem of that holy seed which afterwards he designed to beget to himself by spiritual regeneration, which is therefore called *the circumcision of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God.* His delivering them from the bondage of Egypt, and leading them through the Red sea and the wilderness into Canaan, typified his delivering of his

future church from the bondage of sin and Satan; and leading it by his own gracious presence through the Red sea of blood and persecutions, and the wilderness of the world to the Canaan of eternal rest. His giving the law on mount Sinai in fire, was a figure of his delivering the gospel by the Spirit, which came down in fiery cloven tongues at the feast of Pentecost. Thus his erecting the ark in the wilderness was also another type of that spiritual kingdom which afterwards he meant to erect in the world. The divers ornaments and instruments of that tabernacle represented the diversity of spiritual gifts and functions in the Christian church; its being covered with skins without, and adorned with gold within, shadowed the mean and contemptible form wherein the Christian church first appeared to the world, notwithstanding the inward glory and purity with which it was adorned and embellished. The glory of God appearing in the tabernacle, denoted the presence of Christ in his church, which he hath promised to continue to the end of the world; its being removed from place to place, and finding no rest till it was lodged in the temple, prefigured the persecuted state of the primitive church, which was hunted up and down the world by the mighty Nimrods of the earth, and could find no rest till it was transported to the heavenly temple. By these and such like types and shadows did the eternal Word prefigure the state and condition of his future church, that so when it came to be erected in the world, the Jews might know and own it, having seen it beforehand so exactly deciphered and adumbrated in the very frame and model of their own polity. But when he came to tabernacle in our

nature, he gave actual being to those things which before he only shadowed and represented; for then he erected this glorious church, of which the Jewish was only a model and platform, delivered it from the Egyptian bondage of wickedness and idolatry, and by his own glorious presence conducted the members of it through all the persecutions of an enraged world, to the Canaan of eternal rest; and therefore this also is another plain instance of his tabernacling among us *full of truth*, the state and condition of his church, which before was so obscurely represented.

4. And lastly, Another instance of his tabernacling among us *full of truth*, in contradistinction to that obscure and typical way of his conversing among the Jews, is the glorious recompenses which he hath so plainly and clearly promised to his subjects. For this he also obscurely typified to the Jews; for, as I have already hinted, by that Canaan which he bestowed upon them after their tedious travel through the wilderness, he did darkly represent to them that Canaan above flowing with infinite delights, which he hath promised to bestow upon his faithful servants after they have passed through the wilderness of this world. So also by their *sabbaths*, and especially their *year of jubilee*, wherein they were to rest from all their labours, and keep a perpetual festivity, he did obscurely decipher to them that sabbath of rest, and jubilee of endless pleasure, which virtuous souls shall enjoy in heaven after they have finished their labours here on earth, as you may see at large, Heb. iv. Now by these and such like shadows of their law, which possibly the prophets, by divine inspiration, might expound to them, those

who were wise and good among them, it is very probable, were instructed in the article of eternal life. Hence, it may be, might arise that famous controversy among the Jews concerning the written and oral law, which they call the *cabala*, or the law by tradition; not that this traditional contained any thing that was not in the written law, but because those things which were obscurely contained in the types of the written law were explained and interpreted in this their traditional law. But it is apparent that the types of eternal life were not fully explained in this traditional law till after the Babylonish captivity, after which the prophet Daniel, and after him Ezekiel, began to speak more plainly of *the resurrection of the dead*; and from that time forwards the doctrine of the resurrection and eternal life began to be more openly taught among the common people till about the time of the Maccabees, when it was brought forth into the light from under those types in which it was so obscurely represented, and became a principle even of the popular religion, and an article of the Jewish faith, as plainly appears from the records of those times, particularly 2 Macc. vii. 23, 26. compared with Heb. xi. 35. And indeed it was very necessary that then this article should be more clearly revealed, to fortify the Jews against those many persecutions whereunto they were exposed for the sake of their religion, that they might not be terrified to apostatize from it by those cruel martyrdoms which, in the time of the Maccabees, they many of them endured; and besides now the time of the gospel was approaching, and consequently its mysteries, like the light of the rising sun, began to break forth clearer and clearer from under that cloud of types

wherein it was wrapped and involved, till at last the Sun of righteousness himself arose and dispersed those clouds, and brought *life and immortality to light by the gospel.* But as for the Sadducees, who give no heed to the cabala, or traditional law, in which this doctrine was first discovered, and adhered only to the written law of Moses, they still continued infidels in this point, and believed neither angels nor spirits, nor the life to come; so very obscurely was it represented in the types and shadows of the written law. But when once the eternal Word came to tabernacle in our flesh, he revealed this great article so plainly and clearly to the world, that it is impossible for any one not to believe it, that believes him to be the Messias, or incarnate Word.

And thus you see, by all these instances, what a vast difference there was in respect of truth, between Christ's tabernacling in our nature and in the tabernacle of Moses. And now I shall conclude this argument with two or three practical inferences.

1st, *He dwelt* or *tabernacled among us.* From hence I infer the high authority of Christ, and that holy religion which he hath revealed to us. For to tabernacle among us, as I have already shewed you, signifies to dwell in the midst of, as the shechinah, presence, or representative of the most high God, as one that acted in his Father's person, and was vested with his authority, and consequently as one who hath as great a right to exact our obedience as the eternal Father himself, should he have come down from heaven in his own person to give laws to mankind. For so when the eternal Word went before the camp of Israel, as the *shechinah*, or *angel of God's presence*, God requires them that they should obey

him as himself; *Beware of him, and obey his voice,* saith God; *provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him,* Exod. xxiii. 21. and verse 22. To obey the voice of this angel is interpreted to be the same thing as to obey the voice of the most high God himself; *But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice,* saith God, *and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to thy enemies,* &c. So that for the Israelites to disobey this angel, (who, as I have proved to you, was the eternal Word, or representative of the most high God to them,) was to all intents and purposes the same thing as if they had disobeyed the Most High himself. And accordingly our Saviour tells the Jews, *He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on the Father that sent me;* that is, he doth not merely believe on me, but on the Father too, whose authority I have, and whose person I represent; for so he explains himself in the following verse, *He that seeth me seeth him that sent me;* that is, I being my Father's shechinah, or representative, John xii. 44, 45. And therefore, as every contempt of the deputy, or vice-governor, is an affront to the sovereign prince whose person he bears, and by whose authority he acts; so every rebellion against Christ is an open defiance to the sovereign God, whose person he represents, and by whose authority he reigns. Hence our Saviour tells the Jews, John v. 23. that *he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him;* which plainly intimates, that God the Father resents those indignities which we offer to Christ and his laws, as if they were done to his own person, and that if himself should speak to us from the battlements of heaven, or proclaim his

law to us in a voice of thunder, he would not be more displeased to hear us openly declare that we will not obey him, than he is to see us trample upon the laws of his Son, which he hath stamped with his own sovereign authority. So that if we were not infinitely foolhardy, methinks we should never dare to violate our religion, in which the authority of the most high God is so immediately concerned. For whatsoever our religion requires of us, it requires in his name who hath an undoubted right and authority to command us; for from all eternity he was invested with an absolute and unlimited power of doing any thing that is not unbecoming his divine perfections, and in this the right of his dominion over us is originally founded. For he that hath power must needs have a right to exercise it, so far as it is just and becoming his nature, otherwise his power would be altogether in vain; and therefore since God from all eternity hath a power of doing whatsoever he pleases, so far as is consistent with his holiness and goodness, there is nothing can be pretended against the right of his dominion and authority over us: for God cannot but have an eternal right to exercise his own power, and he cannot but have an immutable right to exercise it over his own creatures. And as from all eternity he had power to do whatsoever was just and becoming him, so from his creating of us, it became most just and becoming that he should rule and govern us; for we became his as soon as we were created by him; all our powers of action were from him; and by that he hath acquired an unalienable right in whatsoever we are able to do. We have nothing but what is his gift, and therefore can do nothing but what is his debt; we received all from

him, and therefore must owe all to him; for by right of creation, he is the supreme proprietor of all our powers and faculties, and as such hath a just claim to all the homage and obedience that we are able to render him. So that as God's dominion over us is originally founded in his most absolute power to do whatsoever is just and becoming him; so the justice and becomingness of his dominion over us doth immediately result from his creating of us, by which he hath for ever entitled himself to all the obedience we can render him. And by virtue of this immutable title doth he claim our obedience to the laws of Jesus Christ, whom next to himself he hath made our prince and ruler, having vested him with his own sovereign authority, and constituted him his supreme representative in the church. So that by disobeying his laws, we incur the guilt of the most monstrous injustice in the world; we resume ourselves from him to whom we owe our being, and refuse to own ourselves to be his creatures, from whose bounty we receive even the power of rebelling against him; we alienate our faculties from those sacred uses whereunto they were designed and consecrated, and turn these living temples of God into dens of impure thoughts and filthy lusts: in a word, we fight against God with his own gifts, and arm the effects of his bounty against his sovereign authority. And what do we think will be the consequence of these things? Can we be so sottish as to imagine that the almighty Father will sit above in the heavens, and see how his laws are trampled upon, his authority contemned, and exposed to scorn and derision, by a company of impious wretches that owe their very beings to him, and never be concerned at it? Do we think him so

stupid a being as that no provocations will awake his vengeance; that he will for ever sit unconcerned with his hands in his bosom, whilst his violated laws, like the souls under the altar, are continually crying out to him, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, "dost thou not avenge our quarrel upon the heads "of these audacious rebels, that every day trample "us under foot, and have no more regard for our au-"thority, than they have for the whistling of the "wind?" For God's sake, sirs, let us consider, before it be too late, what is like to become of us, what probable hopes of security we can propose to ourselves, if we persist in this unjust rebellion. Gird up your loins like men, and I will demand of you, in the name of God, do you think that the wise Governor of the world will be for ever insensible of all the rude affronts and provocations you offer him? If so, pray where is his wisdom, or in what sense doth he govern the world, if he takes no care to secure his laws by punishing offenders, and lets his subjects alone to do as they list? Or have you an arm as strong as God's? Can you grapple with his almighty vengeance, or withstand the stroke of his thunderbolts? Sure such a ridiculous conceit can never enter into any reasonable breast! And if not, in the name of God, what do you propose to yourselves, when you can neither hope for favour from God nor security from yourselves? Are you so abandoned of all your reason, as wilfully to shut your eyes against your danger, and run the desperate venture of falling into the hands of the living God? Hath not our blessed Lord most fairly warned us what we are to trust to? Hath he not told us how he values his laws, and how dreadfully he will punish the transgression of them? Hath

he not most seriously protested to us, that unless we do repent and amend, he will never forgive us either in this life, or that to come; and that if we still persist in our rebellions, he will at last banish us from his presence for ever, and assign us our portion with devils and damned ghosts in that lake that burns with fire and brimstone? And hath he not taken it upon his death that all this is true, when he so freely sealed his doctrines with his blood? And now, after all this, is it possible we should be so senseless as to think we can be safe in our wickedness, when God the Father is enraged both in wisdom and honour to avenge it as an affront to his authority, and God the Son hath revealed his Father's wrath from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men? And therefore, as we value our own safety, it concerns us either to submit to that divine authority which is stamped upon the laws of our Saviour, or else to secure ourselves of some retreat or sanctuary from that almighty vengeance which our rebellion will certainly arm against us.

2dly, He dwelt among us *full of grace*. Hence I infer, what mighty encouragement we have to serve and obey our blessed Master, who in his dwelling among us was full of every thing that can render his service lovely or desirable, and abounded in all those amiable graces that can oblige us to love and obey him. For what was there wanting in our blessed Master that any reasonable subject can desire in his prince and sovereign? Would he desire a prince of a sweet and gracious temper, one that is full of love and tenderness to his subjects? Such a one in the most eminent degree is our blessed Lord: for how doth the history of his conversation upon

earth abound with the expressions of a most sweet and loving temper? For love was the principle of all his actions, the life and soul of his conversation, and in all that he did or spoke he made some new discovery of his unfeigned affection to the world; for he *went about doing good*, and his whole life was nothing but one continued act of charity to mankind. For still you find him either instructing the ignorant, or reproving the erroneous, or comforting the dejected, or feeding the hungry, or curing the sick and diseased: from morning to night he was constantly engaged in one good action or other, and the whole race of his life, like that of the sun, was spent in enlivening or enlightening the world. So endearing was his behaviour, that he obliged his very enemies; and, when he had won them, treated them with all the tenderness and affection of a most loving father towards his dearest children. From all he conversed with he extorted respect and veneration, and none were able to resist the charms of his victorious love, but those whose hearts were harder than the nether millstone. But that I may convince you of the infinite goodness and tenderness of his nature, I will give you but that one instance, Luke xix. 41. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it;* which, as you will see afterwards, was occasioned by the foresight of its approaching ruin and destruction; and yet, at the same time, he foresaw the cruelties which those barbarous villains were about to practise upon him, how they would scourge his body with knotty whips, and nail his hands and feet to the cross, and thrust a spear into his heart; he saw how they would triumph over his misery, mock at his calamity, and dance to the

music of his dying groans. And now one would have thought such a prospect as this would have for ever enraged his soul against them, and made him rejoice to see that sweeping destruction that was coming upon them: but such was the incomparable sweetness of his temper, that while he foresaw them plotting his ruin, he could not but sigh over theirs; and while he beheld their malice all reeking in his blood, and sporting itself with his torments and agonies, yet at the sense of their approaching destruction his very bowels yearned, and his heart melted with commiseration, and he could not forbear weeping, to think that those cursed instruments of all his miseries must ere long be so wretched and miserable themselves; earnestly wishing, that they who so greedily thirsted for his blood had known *in that their day the things which belong to their peace.* And though one would have thought the barbarous entertainment he met with here upon earth would have for ever quenched all his affection to mankind, yet still it lives, and, in despite of all the affronts and outrages he endured, burns as vigorously in his breast as ever. So unconquerable was his love to his subjects, that all the bloody cruelties they practised upon him, when they chased him out of the world, were never able to alienate his heart and affections from them; but, after all their cruelties, he still retained his fatherly bowels towards them, and when he could endure their torments no longer, breathed out his loving soul in an earnest prayer for their pardon, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* And now that he is in heaven, among angels and glorified spirits, where he cannot but remember how unkindly we treated him when he was

upon earth, and perhaps doth still bear upon his glorified body those very wounds which he received from our hands, which one would think were sufficient to incense him against us for ever; yet his heart is the same towards us, full of all those kind and tender resentments that first brought him down from heaven, and rendered his conversation among us so full of sweetness and endearments. And now being so infinitely kind as he is, why should we be disheartened from serving him? Methinks the sense of his love to us, if there were no other argument in the world, should be sufficient to bind us to his service for ever. For, O my soul, how can I do too much for so kind a friend! How can I be too submissive to so good a master, that is so infinitely tender of all his servants, and loves them a thousand times more than they love themselves! Sure if we had any spark of ingenuity in us, the sense of his matchless kindness towards us would be sufficient to turn all our duty to him into recreation, to make us thirst after his service, and catch at all opportunities of expressing our loyalty and obedience to him; we should embrace his commands as preferments to us, and wear them as the greatest favours, and think ourselves more honoured in being the servants of Jesus Christ, than in being made mighty kings and potentates.

2. Consider, as he is *full of grace*, in respect of his own personal disposition, so he is also in respect of his laws; in which, as I have already shewed you, he requires nothing of us but what is for our good, nothing but what tends to the perfection of our natures, and the consummation of our happiness. All that our Saviour requires at our hands, is only that

we should act according to the laws of a reasonable nature, and constantly pursue the great end of our creation, which can never be obtained by us, unless we regulate our actions by those wise and excellent rules which he hath prescribed us, and which he hath prescribed us upon no other inducement, but only to oblige us to be happy. For as to any advantage that will accrue to him from our actions, it is altogether indifferent to him whether we obey him or no; for he was always infinitely happy within himself, and would have always been so, though we had never had a being; so that his felicity depends not upon us; and were it not that the superabundant goodness of his nature doth for ever incline him to make us happy as well as himself, he would never have concerned himself about us, but would have let us alone to do as we list, and abandoned us to the fate of our own actions. He therefore, being infinitely happy within himself, can have no self-ends to serve upon his creatures; because, within the circle of his own divine being he hath all that he needs, and all that he desires; but being infinitely good, as he is infinitely happy, we are sure that our good must be the only end of his intermeddling with our actions, and his giving laws to direct them. And if we consult the particular laws which he hath given us, we shall find they all of them most naturally tend to perfect and rectify our disordered natures, to exalt and spiritualize our affections, and inspire us with all those divine dispositions that are requisite to qualify us for the happiness of the world to come. And now methinks, if we had any sense of our own interest, this consideration should mightily encourage us to obedience, to think that while we are serving

our blessed Master, we are serving ourselves to the best purposes, and that his service and our interest are so combined and united, that by the same actions we may gratify him, and do ourselves the greatest kindness in the world; that he exacts nothing from us but what he was obliged to do by the infinite care and concern he hath for us; and that he had been less kind, should he have required less, and must necessarily have substracted from us some degree of our happiness, should he have abated us any part of our duty. O blessed Jesus, who can complain of thy service, when thy very commands are tokens of thy love; when all the duty thou requirest of us, is only to be kind to ourselves in doing those things, which, if thou hadst never commanded, our own interest would have obliged us to, had we but understood it as well, or regarded it as much as thou dost?

3. But then consider again, as he is *full of grace* to us in his own personal temper, and in those mild and gentle laws which he hath given us; so, thirdly, he is *full of grace* to us also in respect of that gracious pardon and forgiveness which he hath procured for, and promised to us, if we will heartily repent and amend. I confess, though his personal temper should be never so sweet, and his laws never so gentle, yet if he should upon every wilful offence exclude us from all hope of pardon, it might justly discourage the generality of men from engaging any further in his service; because, more or less, *we have all sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God.* So that if upon every wilful act of rebellion we should stand for ever excluded from his favour, we should generally be left in a desperate condition, and then to what purpose should we serve him any longer, when by all our fu-

ture loyalty and submissions, we must never hope to be readmitted into his grace and favour? To remove this great discouragement therefore, the blessed Jesus hath obtained for us this public grant and charter of mercy from his Father, that if now at last we will repent and amend our ways, notwithstanding all our past rebellions, we shall find mercy, and be as freely received into his grace and favour, as if we never had offended him; and this merciful grant he hath published to us in the promises of his gospel: so that now we cannot make the least doubt of our pardon and acceptance with him, upon our unfeigned repentance, without calling his truth and veracity into question. And now, what reasonable cause of discouragement have we from returning to the service of our blessed Master, when we are so amply assured that our past disobediences to him shall, upon our return, be forgotten for ever? For, in the name of God, what can we desire more? Is it reasonable that the wise governor of the world should pardon offenders, whether they repent or no? that he should let them take their swing in wickedness, and never take any cognizance of their actions? Let us speak plainly; would we have him govern us or no? If not, we are infinitely besotted, that for the sake of a few paltry lusts, that are our plague and shame, would deprive ourselves of all the blessings and benefits of his government. But whatsoever we would have, it is by no means fit that he should surrender up his just authority over us, because we are fools and madmen; and if we think it fit that he should govern us, we cannot be so senseless as to think it reasonable that he should pardon our sins till we repent of them; because by so doing he would give up all,

and leave us absolute masters of ourselves. So that if we ourselves had been called to the privy-council of heaven, to give our vote to those laws by which we were to be ruled and governed, doubtless we could not have had the confidence to ask either gentler laws or greater indulgences than the blessed Jesus hath freely granted us in his gospel. If God should have told us, that he would impose nothing on us without our own consent, and bid us ask for ourselves any thing that is fit and modest, doubtless the utmost that any modest man could have craved would have been only this; "Lord, if thou wilt be but so "merciful as to give us such laws as are suited to "our natures, and are conducive to our happiness, "and so far to consider our weakness and instability, "as not to cast us away from thy favour for ever "upon every wilful transgression, but to pardon and "receive us again upon our unfeigned repentance; "this is all the favour we would ask, and for this "we would praise and adore thy goodness for ever "and ever." Since God therefore, out of his own grace and goodness, hath granted this indulgence to us, why should we be discouraged from returning to our duty, though we have never so notoriously violated and neglected it? For now we are fully assured that we can never be excluded from all hope of pardon, till we are past all possibility of repentance.

4. He is *full of grace* to us also, in respect of that abundant assistance which he hath promised and vouchsafed to us. I do confess, though notwithstanding our former rebellions, if he should be never so ready to receive us into favour again upon our unfeigned repentance; yet, unless he will also assist us in our repentance, and enable us to conquer the dif-

ficulties of it, we have still very great reason to be discouraged from his service: for, by our own evil habits, we have so disabled ourselves from returning to our duty, that without the concurrence of a supernatural grace it will be in vain for us to attempt it: for he that from a state of habitual sin enters into a course of repentance, must strive all along against the current of his nature; which, at first especially, and when he is weakest, will be so swift and impetuous, that by his own single strength it will be impossible for him to stem or conquer it; and unless he be assisted by a greater strength than his own, he will be inevitably borne down and carried away with it, though he struggle never so vigorously against it; so that it is no encouragement at all to the service of Christ, that he will receive us to pardon when we heartily repent, unless he will also enable us to repent by the concurrence of his grace with our honest endeavours. But this discouragement also he hath removed out of our way, by making us a public grant and promise of his grace and assistance; for he hath assured us, that he will *give his holy Spirit to every one that asks it*, Luke xi. 13. that if we will *work out our own salvation, he will work in us to will and to do*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. and that *to him that hath*, that is, improves that grace which he hath, *it shall be given more abundantly*, Matt. xiii. 12. so that though we cannot do all by our own single strength, yet we can do so much as will oblige our blessed Master to enable us to do all; and therefore, that we do not do all, is as much our fault as if we could, because we are able to do all through Christ, who will strengthen us, if we will but do what we can; so that this, methinks, should be sufficient to encourage any

reasonable man in the world to undertake his service; to consider that he who is my Master will cooperate with me, and proportion my strength to the work he enjoins me; that he will not stand still with his arms in his bosom, and see me struggle in vain under an insupportable burden of duties, but that he will set too his own shoulders, and contribute his own strength, and enable me, by degrees, to undergo it with ease and alacrity; so that though through the weakness and impotency which I have voluntarily contracted, my duty is become too heavy for my shoulders, yet I will never be disheartened so long as I am sure it is not too heavy for my Saviour's; for if I heartily endeavour, I am confident I shall undergo it, if it be in the power of an almighty grace to enable me.

5. And lastly, He was *full of grace* to us also, in respect of that glorious recompense which he hath promised to us, and prepared for us. I confess, were his service all work and no wages, there were some reason to be disheartened; but when he hath promised, and so amply assured us, that after we have spent a few days or years in his service upon earth, he will receive us into the participation of his own joys, where we shall commence as happy as it is possible for an everlasting heaven to make us, methinks we should kiss his yoke, and court his service, and think we can never do too much for such a bountiful Master, who rewards all his servants with such immortal preferments: for what is the labour of a few moments, compared with that everlasting rest and pleasure wherein it shall shortly terminate? And when once we are arrived to the heavenly Canaan, and have tasted those ravishing delights with which

it flows and abounds, how light and inconsiderable will all these difficulties in our voyage appear to us, which now do so startle and affright us! How shall we wonder at our own sloth and faintheartedness, to think that ever we should be such wretched cowards as to be afraid of any thing that hath heaven at the end of it, which is a happiness so vast and unspeakable, that the hope of it is sufficient to turn torments into recreations! how shall we be astonished at ourselves, to think that we could ever be such wretched fools as to deliberate one moment, whether heaven were preferable before all the pleasures of sin, or whether it were more eligible to dwell with harlots and drunkards for a moment, and wallow in their beastly pleasures, than to enjoy the society of God, and saints, and angels, to all eternity! The odds will then appear so vast, and the disproportion so unspeakable, that we shall wonder how we could ever be so senseless as to make a comparison between them. Sure, sirs, we do not believe that heaven is the recompense of Christ's service; for if we did, methinks we should more heartily engage in it. For could we stand thus deliberating upon the shore, whether we shall bid adieu to our lusts, take leave of all their fulsome pleasures, and embark ourselves in the service of our Saviour? Could we stand pausing thus as we do, whether we shall venture into those petty storms that are like to attend us in our spiritual voyage, did we verily believe that a few leagues distance lies that blessed shore, where we shall be crowned as soon as we are landed with all the joys that an everlasting heaven means? Certainly the belief of this is sufficient to put life and courage into the most crest-fallen soul in the world, and to give her spirit and vigour

enough to carry her triumphantly through all the weary stages of her duty. So that considering how, in all respects, our blessed Lord abounds in grace and goodness to us, we have the greatest encouragement imaginable to engage us to his service.

3dly, *He was full of truth.* From whence I infer, that the Christian religion is a very plain and intelligible thing. For this, as I have shewed you at large, is one of the great notes of distinction between Christ's tabernacling among the Jews and among Christians, that whereas among the Jews he was full of obscure types and mystical representations, among us Christians he is *full of truth;* that is, he is plain, and open, and clear, without any dark reserves or mysteries; now he hath plainly revealed that which before he did so obscurely decipher; now he hath unriddled all those mystical types, and turned them as it were inside outwards, and given us their hidden sense and meaning in plain and naked propositions; and of these our holy religion is composed. So that those doctrines which before were all mystery, whilst they lay obscurely couched under the types and figures of the law, are now brought forth from behind the curtain into the open view of the world, and presented barefaced to our understandings in the most plain, and easy, and familiar sense: not but that Christianity hath some mysteries in it still, whose depths we are not able to fathom; but it is not because Christ hath not revealed them, but because our understandings are incapable of comprehending them: such are the doctrines of the holy Trinity, the incarnation of our blessed Saviour, and the hypostatical union of the divine and human nature in him. Nor indeed is it much to be wondered

at, that we, who with all our wit and reason are not able to explicate the mysteries of a mite or flea, of a plant or a stone, or any of those innumerable things that are before us, should not be able to understand such incomprehensible, to order such infinite, or define such ineffable things; but though we cannot comprehend the modes, nor understand the strict philosophy of them, yet if we would but strip them out of their false disguises into their original plainness and simplicity, we might doubtless easily disentangle them from all repugnancy and contradiction, which is sufficient to render them rationally credible, they being contained in that excellent religion, whose truth is demonstrated by such abundant evidence. But perhaps as God continued all the doctrines of Christianity in a mystery among the Jews, and reserved the clear revelation of them to the coming of the Messias; so, for the same reason, he hath still reserved the clear discovery of those doctrines which are still mysteries to us Christians, for the future state, and then, it may be, we may as fully understand these, as the believing Jews (after the coming of Christ) did those other doctrines of the gospel, which before were all mysteries to them. But, God be praised, whatsoever is necessary to make us good and happy, is now so plainly discovered to us, that we cannot be ignorant of it, unless we wilfully shut our own eyes. We need not dive into mystical senses, or grope after truth among shadows and umbrages, as the good Jews were fain to do under the Mosaic dispensation, all that is necessary to our salvation being written as it were upon the very surface of our religion, and openly exposed to our view in plain and literal proposals. And yet,

notwithstanding the plainness and simplicity of the Christian religion, there are too many, both among ourselves and in the church of Rome, who have industriously set themselves to resolve all its doctrines again into darkness and unintelligible mysteries, having, instead of the plain propositions of our Saviour, introduced a new-fashioned mystical divinity, made up of nothing but certain empty schemes of effeminate follies and wild enthusiasms, which are impossible for any man to understand that cannot conjure for the meaning of them. And those doctrines which our Saviour purposely delivered in the most plain and literal sense, that so the meanest understanding might be instructed by them, these men have blown up, like so many bubbles, into swelling mysteries, which, being stripped of those glittering allusions and pompous metaphors wherein they are clothed, vanish immediately into air, or sink into flat and empty nonsense. For thus the doctrine of faith, and repentance, and justification, which lie as plain in the scripture as words can make them, are by their divinity rendered more obscure and mysterious than ever they were whilst they were couched under the types and figures of the law; more of the true nature being discovered in circumcision, and the legal washings and atonements, than in a hundred volumes of modern systems of divinity. For whatsoever is intelligible they look upon as carnal, and till they have subtilized it into some unaccountable mystery, it is not spiritual enough to be admitted into their system of divinity; as if they thought it below the majesty of religion to expose itself to the view of the world, and there was no way to secure it from contempt, but to lock it up in mysteries and ob-

activities; for else to what purpose should they wrap it round with clouds as they do, unless they design to make a trade of it, and so draw a curtain before it, as men do before their puppet-plays, that so they may get money by shewing it: for it is apparent that religion itself suffers extremely by it; for whilst they thus spiritualize it into air, and do as it were juggle it out of sight in the clouds of their mystical nonsense, they render it extremely suspicious to all that are wise and inquisitive, and will not suffer themselves to be imposed upon by the trains of their mysterious gibberish. And as for their more credulous followers, whilst they thus lead them by the nose through a valley of shades and darkness, they utterly deprive them of the vigorous warmth and comforts of religion; for how should they know how to make use of the arguments and motives of Christianity, when those excellent doctrines from whence they are deduced are wrapped in unintelligible mysteries? For how should they draw forth from the articles of their faith those practical principles that are lodged in them, when those articles are converted into riddles, which they do not, nor cannot understand? Thus, by turning Christianity into a mystery, they do not only thwart the design of our Saviour, which was to bring it forth from under the mysterious representations of the law, and propose it to the world in the most plain and intelligible manner; but they also dispirit religion itself, whose life and energy consists in being understood, and expose it to the contempt and scorn of those that have wit enough to detect the follies of their enthusiastical mysteries.

4thly and lastly, *He dwelt among us full of grace*

and truth. From hence I infer, the inexcusableness of those men that persist in their disobedience to the gospel now that our blessed Lord hath expressed so much grace towards, and so clearly made known his mind and will to us. What excuse can we urge to palliate our wretched disobedience? If you will but imagine yourselves for a little while to be standing before the tribunal of your Saviour, where, ere it be long, you must all appear, I will briefly draw up what in probability will be your plea, and what may be reasonably presumed will be his answer. "In the name of Jesus, then, let me de-
"mand of you, What can you plead for yourselves,
"why that fearful doom which he hath pronounced
"against you should not be passed upon you?"
Why, Lord, we knew that thou wert an austere man; that thou wouldest exact of us to the utmost punctilio, and that, if ever we failed in the least circumstance of our duty, thou wouldest immediately let loose thy implacable vengeance upon us; and this utterly disheartened us from thy service, considering how impossible it was for us to please thee. "Ah wretched creatures! Can you have the
"face to charge me with rigour and severity, who
"have had so many notorious experiments of the
"sweetness of my nature and tenderness of my af-
"fections towards you? What one action was I
"ever guilty of, in all my conversation among you,
"that could give you the least suspicion that ever I
"would prove an austere master to you, or that I
"would not be ready to construe you in the most
"favourable sense, and to pity and pardon you
"wheresoever you were excusable? Did I ever give
"you any occasion to think that I was of a peevish

" or captious nature, apt to be provoked with trifles? " Yea, had you not all the reason in the world to " conclude, from the sweetness of my temper, that I " would be always ready to consider your infirmities, " and pity your weaknesses, and judge you by the " measures of a friend? And do you now pretend " that it was the dread of my severity that dis- " heartened you from my service?" *But, Lord, the laws which thou gavest us were so intolerably burdensome, that neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear them: we would willingly have obeyed thee, if it had been possible; but when we saw thy burden exceeded our strength, we concluded it was in vain for us to attempt the bearing it.* " O un- " grateful rebels! Dare ye accuse me of tyranny, " when you know in your own consciences I never " imposed any law upon you but what had a neces- " sary tendency to your happiness, and was so far " in its own nature from being a burden to you, that " it commanded nothing but what would have been " an ease and refreshment? And if you can produce " any one of my commands that obliged you to any " thing but to be kind to yourselves, or convince me " that I could have enjoined less upon you without " being less kind or merciful to you, I will freely ad- " mit of your plea as just, and immediately pardon " all your disobediences against me. But when all " my laws are instances of my love to you, and ex- " pressions of my zeal for your welfare, who but " such monsters of ingratitude as yourselves would " ever have charged me with tyranny and oppres- " sion?" *But, Lord, thou knowest we are fickle and mutable creatures; and though we did heartily resolve that we would never revolt from thy ser-*

vice, yet through the many temptations that perpetually solicited us, we were at last seduced into a rebellion against thee: and though when we reflected upon what we had done, we were full of sorrow and remorse, and wished from our souls that we had never done it; yet then, being desperate of mercy, and past all hopes of pardon, we concluded that it was too late to repent, or to think of returning to our duty again. "Ah, unworthy "wretches! with what confidence can you impute "the continuation of your rebellion against me to "your despair of ever finding mercy at my hands, "when you know in your own consciences that "I died to procure forgiveness for you, and that "by my death I obtained an act of indemnity and "oblivion for all that would come in, and return to "their duty, upon the proclamation of my gospel? "when you cannot but know that I tendered you "your pardon sealed with my own blood, and courted "you to accept of it; and though, time after time, "you scornfully refused and rejected it, yet, in hope "that at last you might be prevailed with, you know "how long I waited upon you, even till you had "tired out my patience, and I saw there was no re-"medy? And do you now charge your not return-"ing to your duty upon your hopelessness of pardon "for your former rebellions?" *It is true, Lord, we cannot deny but thou didst offer us pardon; but, alas! it was upon an impossible condition, even upon a hearty repentance and a thorough reformation, which thou knewest we were not then able to perform. For by a long custom of rebellion against thee, we had contracted so many inveterate evil habits, which had so weakened and debilitated our*

powers, that we were no more able to reform and amend ourselves than the leopard is to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin: to what purpose then should we attempt impossibilities, or set ourselves to wrestle with difficulties which we knew we were never able to surmount? "But, pray, how did "you know that it was impossible for you to repent, "when by all the arguments I used with you I "could never persuade you to make trial of it? "You know in your own consciences that there are "many things that you could do; you could have "betaken yourselves to a serious consideration of "the duties and motives of religion; you could have "attended, and abstained at least from the outward "acts of sin, and humbly implored my grace and as-"sistance; and that to encourage you to do this, "and what else was in your power, I gave you the "most ample assurance in the world that I would "back and enforce your endeavours with the aids of "my grace, and in despite of all opposition crown "them with success. So that though by your own "single strength indeed you could never have ef-"fected your repentance, yet it was far from being "impossible to you, since you knew that by doing "what was in your power, you should infallibly "oblige me to enable you to do all the rest." *But, blessed Lord, what encouragement had we to repent, and return to our duty? For if we had done it, we must have bid adieu for ever to all those pleasures and delights by which we were invited and detained in the service of our lusts; and thou offeredst us nothing in exchange for them, but only sighs and tears, with other ungrateful rigours of a bitter and severe repentance. How then canst thou*

blame our disobedience against thee, when we had so many inviting temptations to it, and so little encouragement to the contrary? "O prodigious im-
"pudence! With what face can you assert such a
"notorious falsehood, when you know in your own
"consciences, that besides all those pleasures that
"are connatural to my service, and which do vastly
"exceed all the pleasures of sin, I laid an immortal
"crown at your feet, and faithfully promised you,
"that if you would but spend a short life in my ser-
"vice, I would at the end of it receive you into that
"blissful state, where you should be happy beyond
"all your wishes, and to the utmost capacity of your
"nature; where you should live with God and an-
"gels in the most rapturous exercise of everlasting
"love and joy, which one would have thought had
"been sufficient to recompense you for those silly
"pleasures for whose sake you deserted me and my
"service. But, since you have trampled upon all my
"offers, and would by no means be persuaded by all
"those mighty tenders I have made you, go, ye de-
"servedly cursed, into ever——" *Hold, Lord, we beseech thee, and before thou passest thy irrevocable doom upon us, hear this last petition we shall make for ourselves: We now confess that we are fully convinced (and O that we had understood it sooner!) what infinite reason we had to adhere to thee and thy service. It is our misery that these things were not sooner discovered to us, or at least that they were not so clearly discovered as to convince and persuade us. Had we but known what we now know, we would never have deserted thee as we did; and therefore we beseech thee have pity upon our ignorance, and impute not to our*

wills the faults of our understandings, which are not in our power to remedy. "Why, is this the ut-
"most that you can plead for yourselves? Have I
"not told you all these things beforehand as plainly
"as words could express them? Have I not insti-
"tuted an order of men in my church to explain
"these things to you, and to put you in mind of
"them? So that whatever you pretend, you could
"not but know and understand them; or if you did
"not, it was because you would not. And if you
"would wilfully shut your eyes against the light, it
"was your own fault that you did not see, and you
"may thank yourselves for the consequents of it.
"I plainly told you where your wickedness would
"end, and unless you were wilfully blind, you could
"not but see what the event of your sin would
"prove, even while you were committing it; and
"you know in your own consciences that this fearful
"doom, which now you deprecate, you were fairly
"warned of, when you might have easily avoided it
"by a timely submission, but you would not. And
"seeing you would be so mad as to reject heaven
"when it lay before you, and leap into hell with
"your eyes open, your blood be upon your own
"heads. For I have tried all the arts of love and
"methods of kindness to reclaim you; and since you
"have rendered them all ineffectual, what remains,
"but that you depart from me, like accursed wretches
"as you are, into that *everlasting fire prepared for*
"*the Devil and his angels?*"

And now, I beseech you, do not your own consciences consent to the justice and righteousness of this procedure? Is there any tolerable plea you can urge at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ which

here hath not been fully answered? And if so, how inexcusable shall we be, when we come to plead our own cause in the great assembly of spirits? For when these aggravations of our disobedience shall be laid open, our guilt will appear so foul and monstrous, that we shall doubtless be condemned by the unanimous vote of all the reasonable world; and as soon as the great Judge hath passed his sentence upon us, our own consciences will be forced to echo, *Just and righteous art thou, O Lord, in all thy ways.* Wherefore, as we would not be found inexcusably guilty, when we come to plead for our lives before the tribunal of our Saviour, let us all be persuaded to return to his service, and faithfully to continue in it, that so, instead of, *Go ye cursed*, we may hear from his mouth that welcome approbation, *Well done, good and profitable servants, enter into the joy of your Master.*

III. I come now to the last proposition in the text, viz. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only Son of the Father.* In handling of which I shall do these two things:

1. Explain to you what this glory of the Word was which the apostle tells us they beheld.

2. Shew you that it was *the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father.*

1. What was the glory of the Word which the apostle tells us they beheld? I answer in general, by this glory here must be understood something that is resemblant to the glory of his dwelling in the tabernacle; because, as I have already shewed you, the apostle seems plainly to refer it, in that he doth not only tell us that the Word tabernacled among us, which alludes to his tabernacling among the Jews,

but he also tells us, that they saw his glory; which alludes to that glory of the Lord which the Jews beheld in that ancient tabernacle. Since therefore the apostle mentions this glory of the Word incarnate, by way of allusion to the glory of his divine presence in the tabernacle, it must necessarily bear some resemblance or proportion to it; because else it would be no proper allusion. The best way therefore for us to discover what this glory of Christ was which they beheld, is to consider wherein the glory of the divine presence in the tabernacle did chiefly discover itself; and that, you shall find, was in these four things: first, in a bright and luminous appearance; secondly, in exerting of an extraordinary power; thirdly, in giving laws and oracles; fourthly, in sensible significations of its own immaculate sanctity and purity. And in proportion and correspondence to these, the glory of the Word incarnate also must consist in these four things:

1st, In the visible splendour and brightness with which his person was arrayed at his baptism, and more especially at his transfiguration.

2dly, In those great and stupendous miracles that he wrought in the course of his ministry.

3dly, In the incomparable purity and goodness of his life.

4thly, In the surpassing excellency and divinity of his doctrine.

1st, That glory of the Word which St. John and the apostles beheld, consisted in that visible splendour and brightness with which his person was arrayed at his baptism, and more especially at his transfiguration; in resemblance to that visible splendour and brightness in which he appeared in the Mo-

saic tabernacle, where it is frequently said that the glory of the Lord abode and appeared, as you may see, Exod. xxiv. 16. and xl. 34. Which glory, it is evident, discovered itself in an extraordinary visible splendour, that shone from between the cherubims, and diffused itself thence all over that sacred habitation. And accordingly in Ezek. xliii. 2. it is said, that *the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and the earth shone with his glory:* which denotes that it was extraordinary bright and luminous, since the earth shone with the very reflection of it. And in this same glorious splendour was Christ arrayed, first at his baptism, and afterwards at his transfiguration. For at his baptism it is said, that *the heavens were opened unto him,* and that *he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him,* Matt. iii. 16. Where by *the Holy Ghost's descending like a dove,* it is not necessary we should understand his descending in the shape or form of a dove, but that in some glorious form or appearance he descended in the same manner as a dove descends; and therefore St. Luke expresses it thus, *And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him,* Luke iii. 22. that is, he descended in some very glorious and visible appearance, in the same manner as doves are wont to descend when they come down from the skies and pitch upon the earth. But what that shape was in which he appeared is not here expressed; but that which seems to be most probable is this, that the Holy Ghost assuming a body of light, or surrounded as it were with a guard of angels appearing in luminous forms, came down from above just as a dove with his wings spread forth is observed to do, and

lighted upon our Saviour's head; and the reason why I think so is this, both because wherever any mention is made of God's or the Holy Ghost's appearing in an indefinite form, it is always in a body of light and visible splendour, of which I have given you sundry instances; and also because it seems to have been a very early tradition in the church, that it was in a very glorious appearance of light that the Holy Ghost came down upon our Saviour: and therefore in the gospel of the Nazarenes, as Grotius observes, it is said, that upon the Holy Ghost's descent, εὐθὺς περιέλαμψε τὸν τόπον φῶς μεγὰ, "immediately a great light shone round about the place;" and Justin Martyr, speaking of our Saviour's baptism, saith expressly, πῦρ ἀνήφθη ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ, "that there was a fire lighted in the river Jordan;" that is, the water, immediately after he was baptized in it, seemed to be all on fire by the reflection of that bright and flaming appearance in which the Holy Ghost descended upon him; so that while he wore this crown of visible light, his head, as the painters are wont to express it, was circled round with the rays of that glory in which he was wont to appear from between the cherubims. And this glory of his was questionless seen by many of the apostles, who were sundry of them disciples to John the Baptist, and so may reasonably be supposed to be present at the baptism of our Saviour.

And as for his transfiguration upon mount Tabor, it is said, that upon it *his face did shine as the sun, and that his raiment was white as the light;* or, as St. Luke expresses it, ὁ ἱματισμὸς αὐτοῦ λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων; that is, his raiment was like the whiteness of a flash of lightning, Luke ix. 29. So that from

head to foot he was all enrobed in a visible glory, and covered with all that brightness and dazzling splendour, in which he was wont to appear in the tabernacle of Moses. And accordingly you have mention made of a cloud that overshadowed the three disciples, whilst Jesus remained in his transfiguration, which is exactly agreeable with that cloud that covered the tabernacle of Moses, whilst the glory of the Lord filled it, as you may see, Exod. xl. 34. And that this glorious transfiguration was a part of that glory of the Word which St. John here says they beheld, is evident, because himself was one of the three disciples that were eyewitnesses of this glorious scene, and it is expressly said of him and his brethren, that they *saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him*, Luke ix. 32.

2dly, This glory which they saw, consisted in those great and stupendous miracles that he wrought in the course of his ministry, in proportion to that extraordinary power in which the glory of the divine presence discovered itself in the tabernacle of Moses. For thus we find that it was from the tabernacle that God exerted all that miraculous power by which he punished the rebellions of the Jews, and wrought those miraculous deliverances for them. It was from the tabernacle that he commanded the earth to open and swallow up Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, and that he sent forth that devouring fire which consumed their two hundred and fifty accomplices. It was from the tabernacle that he smote the false spies with the plague, and sent forth an army of fiery serpents to destroy the murmuring Israelites. It was by his presence in the tabernacle that he conducted them through the wilderness,

and drave their enemies before them; that he divided the river Jordan to open them a passage into Canaan, and made the wall of Jericho to fall flat at the blasts of a few rams' horns. And upon the account of this miraculous power which he exerted from the tabernacle, the ark that was contained in it, and was the special seat of his presence, is called *the ark of his strength*, Psalm cxxxii. 8. and God is said to *send them help from his sanctuary, and to strengthen them out of Sion*, where the ark was reposited in the sanctuary of the temple, Psalm xx. 2. Thus also those words are to be understood, Psalm lxxx. 2. *Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and help us;* because the ark, from whence God was wont to put forth his strength in saving of that people, marched immediately before these three tribes. And this was very well understood both by the Israelites and the Philistines; for when the Philistines had overthrown them, they desired that the ark of the Lord might be fetched out of Shiloh, that so when it came among them it might save them out of the hands of their enemies, 1 Sam. iv. 3. And when the Philistines understood that the ark was brought into their camp, they were sore afraid, and cried out, *God is come into the camp.—Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty Gods? These are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness*, ver. 7, 8. From whence it is evident, that they both looked upon the tabernacle as the seat of God's miraculous power, and this miraculous power is called *the glory of God*; for thus, when the ark was taken by the Philistines, it is said that God *delivered his strength*

into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand, Psalm lxxviii. 61. and his glory, and the miracles that he wrought from the tabernacle in the wilderness, are mentioned as synonymous terms, Numbers xiv. 22. *Because all these men have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness,* &c. So that it is evident, that he exerted his miraculous power from the tabernacle, and that this miraculous power was his glory.

And consonantly hereunto it was from the tabernacle of human nature wherein he dwelt, that the eternal Word exerted that miraculous power whereby he cured the sick, calmed the sea, raised the dead, vanquished the devils, and wrought all his miraculous works, which were so many and so great, that they ravished his friends with joy to behold them, and struck terror and amazement into his enemies; for so it is said, that *they were all amazed at the mighty power of God* that was in him, Luke ix. 43. And that when they saw how the devils trembled and fled before him, *they marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel,* Matt. ix. 33. So that by their own confession, that miraculous power which he exerted in the tabernacle of human nature did far exceed that miraculous power which he exercised in the tabernacle of Moses. And this miraculous power of his is also expressly called *his glory,* John ii. 11. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.* So that as his miraculous power was called *his glory* when he tabernacled among the Jews, so it was also when he tabernacled in human nature, and so by consequence this also was a part of that glory of

his which his apostles saw while he dwelt among them.

3dly, This glory which they saw consisted also in the surpassing excellency and divinity of his doctrine, agreeably to that expression of his glorious presence in the old tabernacle, viz. his giving laws and oracles to the Israelites. For thus we find that God told Moses, that he would *meet him in the tabernacle, and commune with him of all things, which he would give him in commandment to the children of Israel*, Exod. xxv. 22. And, Numbers vii. 89. you have the manner of his communing with them described; for *when Moses*, saith he, *went into the tabernacle, he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark, from between the two cherubims.* For Christ, as I have formerly shewed you, being the civil prince or sovereign of the Jews, the cherubims were the throne upon which he sat, and from whence he gave laws and directions for the administration of the affairs of his kingdom: and accordingly he is said to *dwell between the cherubims*, Psalm xcix. 1. and *to ride upon the cherubims*, 2 Sam. xxii. 11. and the sanctuary wherein the cherubims were seated, is expressly called *the throne of the Lord*, Jerem. xvii. 12. because here it was that he sat in all his majesty, and gave forth his laws and ordinances to the kingdom of Israel. And this was an eminent expression of the glory of his presence among them, because hereby he asserted his sovereign authority, and did publicly challenge to himself that right to his glorious power which from all eternity was inherent in him. And hence the apostle calls the giving those divine laws and oracles a *glorious mi-*

nistration, and plainly asserts it to be an instance of the glory of the divine shechinah, or presence in the tabernacle, when he grants that *the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone, was glorious*, yea, and that ministration to be glory in the abstract, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9.

And in correspondence hereunto did the divine Word, when he tabernacled in our natures, give forth divine laws and oracles to the world; all which are yet remaining among us, and do contain in them the substance of our holy religion; which being so divine and godlike, and altogether composed of the purest laws and most heavenly doctrines, is a most proper instance of that glory of the eternal Word which the apostles beheld, though not with the eyes of their bodies, yet with those of their minds. For what can be more glorious in the eye of reason, than those illustrious discoveries which he hath made to us in his gospel of the nature of God, and the duty of man, and the immortal recompenses of the world to come? in which he hath so far exceeded whatsoever human wisdom was able to discover of them, that all the philosophy that ever was before him must confess itself eclipsed and outshone by him, and all the philosophy that ever succeeded him, hath been forced to derive and borrow light from him: and accordingly we find his gospel, in which his doctrines are contained, styled by the name of *the glorious gospel*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. which in comparison with those dark and confused discoveries which the world had formerly made, the apostle resembles to the first breaking forth of the light out of the rude and obscure chaos, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *For God*, saith he, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the*

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; where, by *the face of Jesus Christ*, the apostle seems plainly to allude to that divine glory and lustre with which Moses's face shone when he came down from seeing *the glory of God*, Exod. xxxiii. 29. So that his meaning is this; that as the children of Israel with their bodily eyes saw the glory of God shining upon the face of Moses, so they, the disciples and apostles of our Saviour, had far more clearly beheld with the eyes of their minds the divine glory displayed in his doctrine and ministry.

4thly and lastly, This glory of the eternal Word which they saw, consisted also in the incomparable sanctity and purity of his life, semblably to that expression of his glorious presence in the old tabernacle, viz. the sensible significations he gave of the immaculate purity and holiness of his nature. For by those outward cleansings of all things and persons that did any ways belong to the tabernacle, or did at any time approach it, he did openly represent and signify the purity and sanctity of his own nature, which being infinitely separated from all manner of impurity and uncleanness, cannot endure that any thing that is filthy or impure should approach it. For thus we read that the tabernacle itself, and all the utensils of it, were to be purified and sanctified with oil before the entrance of the shechinah, or divine presence: so also the high priest, the priests, and the people, were to be cleansed and purified before they were suffered to approach the holy habitation; and if at any time they had contracted any of those legal uncleannesses that are specified in the law of Moses, they were to be excluded from the communion of the congregation, and from all the

exercises of public worship and devotion, till they were cleansed and purified again: the intent of all which was to signify to that people, how irreconcileable his nature was to all impurity and wickedness, that it could not admit of the neighbourhood of any evil, nor dwell within any lines of communication with it; for this is expressed in the very reason why these legal purifications are so strictly required: *For I the Lord your God am holy*, Levit. xix. 2. *For I the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy*, Levit. xxi. 8. plainly intimating, that the intent and reason of all those ceremonial purifications, was to signify to that dull and stupid people the immaculate holiness and purity of his own nature, which is so infinitely removed from any thing that is impure and unholy, that he could neither communicate with, nor endure the approaches of it. And in this it is evident he placed a great part of the glory of his majestatical presence in the tabernacle, since a great part of that religion which he there instituted was intended to signify the glory of his holiness to them; and accordingly he is described to be *glorious in holiness*, Exod. xv. 11.

And agreeably hereunto did the eternal Word, when he tabernacled in our natures, signify to the world the unspotted purity of his nature, by that incomparable example of holiness which he gave in his life and conversation among us. For whereas before he expressed his holiness by mystical types and ceremonial observances, he hath now signified it by a life full of virtue and goodness, and a conversation exactly conformable to the eternal rules of righteousness. For, as a creature, in respect of his humanity, he never failed in the least punctilio of that duty,

homage, and devotion which he owed to the most high God his Creator; as a man, he never swerved either in his passions or appetites from the strictest rules of sobriety and temperance; as a member of human society, he never was guilty of an unrighteous action, either towards his superiors, inferiors, or equals; but all his life was a walking monument of goodness, and his whole conversation a most perfect transcript of those divine and heavenly laws which he gave to the world. So that he was all glorious without as well as within, his practice being a living comment and paraphrase upon that immaculate purity and holiness which is the glory of his divine nature. This therefore was doubtless a part of that glory which the apostles beheld in the eternal Word, even that immaculate sanctity and holiness of which he gave so many glorious significations in the whole course of his conversation: and accordingly we find this his purity and holiness described by the name of *the glory of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord:* where it is plain that by *the glory of the Lord* must be meant his holiness; because it is into the image of that, that we are transformed. So that the meaning of the words is this; We all, beholding the holiness of Christ, which is his glory, in the glass of his doctrine and incomparable example, are transformed into the likeness of it; and do gradually pass on from one degree of this glory of his holiness to another, under the conduct and assistance of the Spirit of Christ.

And so I have done with the first thing proposed,

which was to shew you what that glory of Christ was which the apostle here tells us they beheld.

2. I now proceed to the second branch of my discourse, which was to shew you that this was *the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father:* but before we proceed to the proof of it, it will be necessary to explain this phrase, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς, *the glory as of the only begotten Son.* Which word ὡς, or *as,* is in scripture taken two ways, sometimes as a note of similitude or comparison; so Matt. vi. 10. *Thy will be done in earth,* ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ, *as it is in heaven;* that is, like as it is in heaven; and if we take it in this sense, then the meaning of the words must be this, *and we beheld his glory, which was like unto the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father;* that is, like unto that glory in which the only begotten Son was wont to appear when he dwelt in the tabernacle, and conversed with the ancient patriarchs. And in this sense I have shewed you already how it was as *the glory of the only begotten Son,* by shewing you the great agreement and similitude there was between the glory of Christ, when he dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses and in the tabernacle of our nature. And when I consider how plainly this text doth allude to the shechinah, or divine presence of the Word in that ancient tabernacle, I am very much induced to think that we ought not to exclude this sense of it, namely, that as he dwelt in the tabernacle of our nature, like as he dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses; so that glory of his which they beheld in the tabernacle of our nature was like unto that glory in which he appeared in the ancient tabernacle.

But then this word ὡς is sometimes also taken

for a note of confirmation. So Psalm lxxiii. 1. Ὡς ἀγαθὸς ὁ Θεὸς, *Truly God is good to Israel.* And thus St. Chrysostom understands it here, Ὡς οὐκ ὁμοιώσεως ἐστὶν, οὐδὲ παραβολῆς, ἀλλὰ βεβαιώσεως &c. "It is "not a note of similitude and comparison, but of "confirmation and unquestionable distinction;" as if the evangelist had said, We saw his glory, such as became and was fit for the only begotten and truly natural Son of God. For my part, I see no reason why the words may not be fairly understood in both senses, since they are no ways opposite to, nor inconsistent with one another; and if so, then this must be the meaning of the words: *We beheld his glory, which was like unto that glory in which the only begotten Son appeared in the old tabernacle, and which was such as was every way becoming the only begotten Son to appear in.* The first of which senses I have proved to you already, that the glory of Christ in the tabernacle of our natures was like unto his glory in the tabernacle of Moses; and therefore now I shall only prove the second, that it was such as became and was every way worthy of *the only begotten Son of the Father;* and this I doubt not will plainly appear by considering the several particulars of it.

1st, That visible splendour and brightness in which he appeared at his baptism and transfiguration was such as became him, and was worthy of him. For in all probability that splendour consisted of angelical beings, clothed in bright and luminous bodies; because, as I have formerly proved to you, that brightness in which he appeared upon the mount, and which he displayed from between the cherubims, was nothing else but those *angels of light,* or *minis-*

tering spirits, which he made to appear as flames of fire round about him; and therefore that train of angels whom Esay saw filling the temple, Esay vi. 1. our Saviour calls *the glory of the Lord*, John xii. 41. that is, that visible glory in which the Lord appeared from between the cherubims. And if that visible glory consisted in a train of angels appearing in glorious forms, then there is no doubt but that visible glory of our Saviour at his baptism and transfiguration was the same; since, as I have already shewed you, it is described by the same name and in the same manner of appearance; and if so, how well did it become the only begotten Son to be surrounded with the illustrious guards of his Father's court, and attended on with those high-born spirits, whose office it is to minister before the throne of the Most High! For never was the most glorious potentate upon earth attended with such a splendid train and retinue, the meanest of which was far more illustrious than the greatest and most high-born monarch in the world. So that as the most high God did, by a voice from heaven, both at his baptism and transfiguration, declare him to be his beloved Son; so by the glorious train of attendants he sent him, he manifested the truth of his declaration; for we must needs suppose him to be the Son of the Most High, when we see the most glorious beings in all the creation so willingly submit themselves to his service and attendance: and when we see the Most High adorning his outside with the luminous bodies of angels, we may reasonably conclude that there was a divinity within, and that the jewel was God, because the casket was angels. But whatsoever this glorious splendour was in which he was clothed at

his baptism and transfiguration, it was apparently such as very well became *the only begotten Son;* not only because, as the philosopher saith, that if God would ever take upon him a body, it would be certainly light, which is a vestment most suitable to his glory and majesty; but also because that miraculous splendour was an infallible token of the presence of the divinity in him, for it never was but where God was present; and therefore it is called *the glory of God*, it being the inseparable concomitant of his more peculiar residence. For thus, as I have shewed you, upon the mount and in the tabernacle, it was a visible demonstration of the special presence of the invisible God, and wheresoever in all the Old Testament any mention is made of its appearance, you shall find that there God himself did peculiarly reside: and therefore it is not to be imagined that God would have communicated to our Saviour this inseparable token of his own presence, unless the divinity had resided in him. For Jesus Christ was the only person upon whom this visible glory descended; never did the hand of Heaven put forth such a robe and diadem of glory upon any person in the world, as this which our Saviour wore at his baptism and transfiguration, which plainly denotes that he was the only person in whom the divinity was substantially united and did essentially dwell. So that as this visible glory was a certain token of God's peculiar residence in the tabernacle and temple, so it was also of his special presence in Christ; for the history of his baptism tells us, that it did not only make a transient appearance, but that it remained on him, signifying that the divinity, whose presence was denoted by it, had made him his habi-

tation and place of constant abode. For though that visible glory after some time disappeared, and went off from him, yet the thing signified by it, viz. the divine presence, always remained in him; for by that outward glory he was clearly manifested to be the holy one of God, the tabernacle and sanctuary in which God was, and where he had taken up his residence for ever; that his human nature was that sacred temple where the divinity intended to dwell, and from whence for the future he would deliver all his oracles, and communicate all his blessings to mankind. So that in this respect this visible glory was such as highly became *the only begotten Son;* because it plainly denoted that the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily in him, and had chosen him for his habitation for ever; and therefore John Baptist tells us, that though he knew him not, yet this God had revealed to him, *Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record that it was the Son of God,* John i. 33, 34. Where you may observe, that though it was revealed to him only that he was the person that should baptize with *the Holy Ghost,* upon whom the Spirit descended, yet he bare record also that this person was *the Son of God;* rationally concluding that this visible glory, which was such an infallible token of the special presence of the divinity, was never to be communicated to any but *the Son of God.* And it is very observable, that at both these times, when our Saviour was arrayed in this glorious splendour, he is declared by a voice from heaven to be *the Son of God,* it being the Father's intention at once to manifest him to be his

Son both by word and deed; and at the same time, when he declared him to be his Son, to array him in such a glory as became the dignity of his person.

2dly, The great and stupendous miracles that he wrought were such as became his *only begotten Son*. It is true, it cannot be denied but several miracles have been wrought by mere men, they being authorized by God, and assisted by his almighty power; but so many and so great as our Saviour wrought were never performed by any mortal. For as to the number of them, they were more than ever were wrought by Moses and all the prophets together; for, besides those that are recorded, which were all performed within the space of four years at most, St. John tells us, that he wrought so many that the world could not contain the records of them, John xxi. 25. which, though it be an hyperbolical expression, yet denotes thus much at least, that the number of them was so great that they were almost innumerable. And as to the greatness of them, they did apparently exceed all that ever were wrought before in the world. For he did not only raise the dead, but he raised himself also after he had been barbarously murdered by his enemies. He made the winds and sea obey him, and with the word of his mouth vanquished the devils, and drave them from their habitations, and forced them, against their wills and their interest, to acknowledge him to be the Son of God. And whereas the miracles of Moses and the prophets were most of them noxious, they being acts of divine vengeance upon the wicked and ungodly, and consequently more apt to terrify than to oblige those that beheld them; the miracles of our Saviour were all of them expressions of his unfeigned love

and good-will to the world. For among all that vast number of wondrous works that he wrought, there is not one to be found by which any man was ever prejudiced, unless it was his dismissing the devils into the swine of the Gadarenes, which, without all doubt, he did in kindness and good-will to the owners; who being so cruel to themselves as to prefer their swine before their Saviour, it was great charity and mercy to deprive them of that which was so apparent a hinderance to their enjoyment of a far greater good. So that all his wondrous works were nothing but acts of kindness and beneficence; for he *went about doing good,* curing all that were possessed with the Devil, and healing all manner of diseases. And whereas none of those that wrought miracles before him could ever pretend to perform them by any immanent power of their own, but had only a transient power given them for the present miracle, which they either obtained from God upon their prayers and supplications, or was given by God for the execution of his own will and command, the blessed Jesus had this power subjected and abiding in him, so that he could exert it when, and where, and as often as he pleased; and whether he were absent or present, with the word of his mouth he could do what he would; yea, and many times he performed his wondrous works without any word or sign intervening, even by a silent virtue proceeding from that miraculous power with which he was endued; and of all his miracles there is only one which he performed upon prayer and supplication to his Father, and that was his raising Lazarus from the dead; the reason of which he himself gives, John xi. 42. *Because of the people which stand by, that they may believe*

that thou hast sent me: intimating that he did not offer up this prayer to his Father with design to obtain of him a new power of working miracles, which he was already endued with in an abundant measure; but that hereby I might signify to the people how acceptable I am to thee, and let them see that I do all my works in thy name. And that he had this power is evident in that he did so plentifully communicate it to his apostles and followers, which neither Moses or the prophets were ever able to do. For thus, Luke x. 19. he expressly tells his seventy disciples, *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions;* and so also when he dismissed his twelve apostles into Judea, Matt. x. 8. he bids them, *Go, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils;* for *freely ye have received,* saith he, and therefore *freely give.* From all which it is apparent, how far the miraculous works of our Saviour did exceed all those that ever were done before him; and being so great and excellent, so far transcending all that ever was done by any mortal, they plainly demonstrated him to be *the Son of God,* and very well became the dignity of his person. For how could he have done all these mighty things by a power immanent in himself, had he not been the Son of an omnipotent Father? And in what more becoming way could he have expressed that omnipotent power which he derived from his Father, than in those astonishing miracles of love which he wrought in the world?

3dly, The excellent and divine doctrine which he taught was such as became *the only begotten Son.* For certainly if we consider the excellent frame and

contrivance of the Christian religion, we cannot but confess it to be most divine and godlike, most worthy of that infinite wisdom and goodness from whence it was derived. For religion in general is the means of advancing rational beings to that perfection and happiness, for which the great Creator hath designed and intended them; and certainly never was there any religion in the world more adapted to advance this noble design of God, than that which our Saviour hath taught: for as for its *agenda*, what it requires to be done, they all consist in acting reasonably, and according to the dignity of our nature, in thinking, speaking, and practising; in loving and hating, desiring and delighting, hoping and fearing, as becomes reasonable beings placed in our condition and circumstances; and do require nothing of us, but that we should regulate our practice by the rules of right reason, and direct all our faculties and affections to their proper ends and objects; and when we come to this pitch, always to think that which is most reasonable, and always to practise what we think so, then we are advanced to the topmost round of our perfection, in which is founded the utmost happiness we are capable of: so that in all the course of our Christian practice, we are in a direct progression and tendency towards our perfection and happiness. And as for the *credenda* of Christianity the doctrines it requires us to believe, they are all of them pregnant with the most strong and vehement motives to engage us to the practice of what it enjoins; motives that have such a potent (I had almost said omnipotent) force in them, that it is impossible for any man heartily to believe, and throughly to weigh and consider them, and not be effectually persuaded by them.

Since therefore it was so highly convenient that the Son of God in person should come down from heaven among us, that so the dignity of his person might give authority to that religion by which the world was to be governed: and since he did come down upon this honourable errand, it was impossible for him to have taught any doctrine that could more effectually have promoted the great end of religion, or more fully expressed his infinite wisdom and goodness, and zeal for the welfare of the souls of men, than that which is contained in the Christian religion, which is every way so adapted to make men good and happy, so accommodated to the nature and condition of mankind, that there is nothing could better become *the only begotten Son* to teach in the world, or that could be more worthy of all those infinite perfections that are lodged in his nature, and do speak him to be the most genuine offspring of the Most High. For so excellent was his doctrine, that his very enemies were astonished at the wisdom that was given him, Mark vi. 2, 3. and *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth*, Luke iv. 22. Well therefore might he say of himself, *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, John viii. 12.

4thly and lastly, The incomparable sanctity and purity of his life was such as very well became *the only begotten Son*. For as it was highly convenient that he should come down into the world, and in his own person teach us that religion by which he intended to govern us, that thereby he might stamp it with a more awful authority; so, to render it more successful, it was no less convenient that he should

come down in our natures, that therein he might be capable of practising what he taught us, and setting us an example of what he would have us to do, that so we might see that he enjoined nothing upon us but what was practicable, and what did become the most glorious person that ever did assume our natures; that thereby we might be encouraged to our duty, and animated with a noble emulation of treading in his blessed footsteps. Since therefore all this was so highly convenient, and the Son of God, in compliance with this convenience, did actually assume our nature, it was impossible for him to lead a life that better comported with this design of his incarnation, or better became the dignity and excellency of his person, than he did. For now that he was become a man, he was obliged to act suitably to his nature; and should he have done any thing that was unsuitable to the state and circumstances of his nature, he would not have acted becoming himself. So that it was highly convenient that he should become a man, and being a man, it was indispensably necessary that he should live like a wise and a good man in the condition and relations wherein he was placed, and nothing could be more worthy of or becoming him, than so to do, though he was still *the only begotten Son of the Father*. For it is the glory of God himself, that he always acts most reasonably, according to the state and relations of a God; and therefore when God becomes man by assuming our nature to his own, it is his glory to act most reasonably in the state and relations of a man. And thus did the blessed Jesus do in the whole course of his conversation upon earth; for his life was a most exact pattern of all human virtues, in which all that is

ornamental to human nature was represented in its fairest colours: there you may see a fair example of the most ardent love to, and constant dependance upon God, of the most profound humility and perfect resignation to his heavenly will. There you may behold the moderation of human passions and appetites set forth to the life, and fairly delineated in its most exquisite perfections; in a word, there you will find loyalty and submission to superiors, fidelity and justice to equals, courtesy and candour, and condescension to inferiors, universal love, and an unbounded charity to all, practised to the height and exactness; and which way soever you turn your eyes on this fair monument of virtues, you can discover nothing but what is lovely and adorable, and infinitely becoming *the only begotten Son of the Father.*

Having thus explained and demonstrated the proposition to you, I shall conclude with these four inferences from this fourfold glory of the Word which they saw.

1. They saw the glorious splendour which invested his person at his baptism and transfiguration: from whence I infer his deputation from the most high God and Father of all things, to be his representative and viceroy in the Christian church. For this visible glory with which he was invested was always the peculiar character of the immediate representative of God; and therefore, by way of appropriation, it is called *the glory of God,* and *the glory of the Lord;* and wheresoever God, as supreme Monarch and Governor, is represented as residing and taking up his royal habitation, there you always find him displaying himself in this visible glory and splendour. Thus when by the eternal Word he was re-

presented among the Jews as their supreme Lord and Governor, he always manifested his majestic presence among them by some bright and shining appearance; the first instance of which was his appearance to Moses from out of the burning bush upon mount Sinai, where he first acted under God the Father as sovereign King of Israel, in commissioning Moses to be their captain and leader out of Egypt; for here it is said, that *he appeared in a flame of fire*, Exod. iii. 2. that is, in a visible glory that resembled the brightness of a flame of fire. For this mountain he had chosen for the seat and throne of his majestical residence, from whence he intended to give laws to Israel, and to exert his royal dominion over them; and therefore here he appears in that visible glory which was always the character of the divine King and immediate representative of God to that people. And indeed if that be true which Josephus tells us, this mountain was looked upon as the habitation of God long before ever Moses came thither; for therefore, says Josephus, did Moses drive his father Jethro's flock thither to feed, because of all other places it most abounded with pasture, διὰ τὸ δόξαν ἔχειν ἐνδιατρίβειν αὐτῷ τὸν Θεὸν, οὐ κατανεμηθείσης πρότερον, οὐ τολμώντων ἐμβατεύειν εἰς αὐτὸ τῶν ποιμένων[a]; that is, "because it "was famed that God dwelt there, which was the "reason that the shepherds never durst to drive "their flocks thither, because of the sacredness of "the place." And if this report be true, then it seems this mountain was the seat of the royal residence of the eternal Word before ever Moses came thither; and consequently the glory and brightness in

[a] Jos. Antiq. l. ii. cap. 12.

which Moses saw him appear, was nothing but the display of his majestic presence, which did there make its ordinary abode. But whether that be true or false, it is most plain and apparent, that wheresoever he appeared as the King of Israel, or representative of God to them, he always clothed himself in a visible glory and splendour. Thus he appeared to them in a pillar of fire, that is, in a most bright and luminous form, when he conducted them through the Red sea and the wilderness; and when he came down upon mount Sinai to give the law to them, it is said that the glory in which they beheld him was *like devouring fire*, Exod. xxiv. 17. that is, it was unspeakably bright and refulgent, even like that of a most intense and vehement fire; and in all this radiant glory did he display himself from between the cherubims when he removed from the mountain, and chose the tabernacle for the seat of his future residence and royal abode. Thus wheresoever he appeared in his kingly majesty, as the public representative of his Father, this visible glory is always made mention of, as that which was the peculiar character of his presence and person. It is true, it is recorded of Moses, that when he came down from the vision upon the mount, his face shone so brightly that the Israelites were not able to approach him; which seems to argue, that this visible glory was not so peculiar to the eternal Word, as his Father's representative, as we would have it, since we plainly see it was common to Moses with him. But this doth no ways destroy our assertion; because it is plain that that glory which covered the face of Moses was all derived from the glory of the eternal Word, with whom for forty days he had conversed in the mount.

For Moses being sent down as an apostle to the Jews, to promulgate those laws to them which he had received upon the mount, the eternal Word, to convince the unbelieving Jews that he had sent him, reflects upon his face some rays of glory from that sphere of light in which he appeared to and conversed with him, that that might be an ocular demonstration to them, that Moses came from him, and was commissioned by him to preach and promulgate his laws to them. So that Moses's glory being derived from the Word, declared him to be his apostle and minister; even as the glory of the Word being derived from the Father, declared him to be his representative and viceroy; so that from its shining upon the face of Moses, it by no means follows that this visible glory is not the peculiar character of God's immediate representative; because that which shone upon his face was only the parhelius or reflection of the visible glory of him who was God's immediate representative. For so the earth also is said to *shine with the glory of the God of Israel*, Ezek. xliii. 2. and as the glory with which it shone was not the glory of the earth, but the glory of the God of Israel; so neither was that glory upon the face of Moses the glory of Moses, but the glory of that divine person with whom he had conversed, derived to and reflected upon him; and it being still the proper glory of that divine person, may very well be said to be the peculiar character of his being the immediate representative of God, notwithstanding it reflected from him upon Moses; especially considering that this reflected glory upon Moses's face was to be an evidence to the Jews, that he came down to them as an apostle from the eternal Word, with authority to

publish and declare his laws to them. For if this derivative splendour was an evidence that Moses came down as an apostle from that divine person on the mount, then the original splendour of that divine person whence it was derived and reflected, was at least an equal evidence that he came down upon the mount as the apostle and immediate representative of the most high God himself.

And in the same manner we find that the Word incarnate did give evidence to the commission of his Christian apostles; for upon the day of Pentecost, when they were assembled together, it is said that *there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and sat upon every one of them,* Acts ii. 3. that is, there were several flashes or beams of glory, which, like bright flames of fire, did cleave asunder in many places, according to the natural motion of flames, of which every part, as it extends itself in length, grows more spire-like, or pyramidal, and so divides from the part next to it; and upon the head of every one of the apostles did one of these divided flames of glory rest in the form of a tongue, which, like a flame, grows sharper and sharper towards the top: for thus the Hebrew idiom, for a flame of fire, uses the *tongue* of fire, because of the resemblance that is between them, Isa. v. 24. So that as the eternal Word did evidence to the Jews the apostleship of Moses by that visible glory which he reflected on his face, so did the Word incarnate evidence to the Christian church the apostleship of the twelve by this visible glory which he derived upon them. For now, according to John the Baptist's prediction of him, he baptized them *with the Holy Ghost and with fire,* Luke iii. 16. that is, by the outward sign

of that visible glory which rested like fire upon them, he solemnly initiated them into their apostleship, and declared them to be the heralds of his will to the world. And as this visible glory with which he baptized them was an evidence of their being sent from and commissionated by him to bear his authority, and represent his person; so that visible glory with which he was baptized from heaven, first in the river Jordan, and afterwards upon mount Tabor, was an undoubted evidence that he was sent from above to be his Father's representative in the church: for if their shining with his glory was an evidence of their being invested with his authority, then his shining with his Father's glory must be an equal evidence of his being invested with the authority of his Father. And as this visible glory was always the peculiar character of God's immediate representative, and the royal crown and robes, as it were, with which the Most High adorned him at his inauguration and investment with his own kingly authority; so St. Peter expressly tells Cornelius and his company, that *God had anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power*, Acts x. 38. that is, by that outward sign of the visible glory in which the Holy Ghost descended upon him, he had invested him with regal power, and deputed and declared him to be King of the church. And this in all probability was the reason why he forbade his disciples to declare his transfiguration till after *his resurrection from the dead*, Mark ix. 9. because he knew that if they did, the Jews would not believe it, but would maliciously interpret it to be a false pretence of his to the title of God's immediate representative and viceroy, that visible glory in which he

appeared being the proper character of that divine King by whom the most high God had formerly governed them; and therefore, in all the history of his life, you find he did industriously avoid openly to avow his regal authority, and only insinuates it by consequences and obscure intimations. For so violently were they prejudiced against his being their king, upon the account of his obscure parentage and mean condition, that he could not but foresee how unseasonable it would yet be publicly to own his regal authority, and consequently the glory of his transfiguration, which did so apparently infer it; till by more miraculous effects, and particularly by his resurrection from the dead, he had sufficiently proved and demonstrated it; and then he openly declares, without any reserve, that *all power was given him in heaven and earth*, Matt. xxviii. 18. Since therefore it is so apparent by this characteristical glory in which his person was enrobed, and which the apostle assures us they saw him invested with, we have all the reason in the world to conclude, that the most high God hath deputed him to be King and Lord of the church. For when the apostle tells us, that they saw this visible glory which shone upon him at his baptism and transfiguration, he doth as good as say, that they saw all the solemnity of his divine coronation, that they beheld the most high God circling his brows with the royal diadem, and investing his sacred body with the imperial robes of the great king of the world. So that if it be true what St. John says, that they did see this glory, (as we have all the reason in the world to conclude it is, because he offered to seal his testimony of it with his blood, and the other two that saw it with him ac-

tually did so,) then we cannot but acknowledge the blessed Jesus to be our King, to whose divine authority we are bound to pay the lowest homage and obedience; and that whensoever we wilfully transgress his laws, we do openly rebel against our most rightful sovereign, to whose service we are bound by all possible ties and obligations.

2. They saw the glory of that miraculous power which he exerted in the course of his ministry; from whence I infer the credibility of the Christian religion: for the many stupendous miracles that he wrought were a most plain and unquestionable evidence of a divine power residing in him and accompanying his ministry. For never were there so many miraculous effects produced, either before or since, in the world, by the most renowned workers of miracles that ever were; and all that hath been done by the most famous magicians, that are recorded in history, were but like the little tricks and delusions of jugglers, compared with the wondrous works of our Saviour; and yet it is apparent that his education had been most plain and simple, that he never had been instructed in any mathematical science or mystical rites, or in any other art of performing wonders, either by human wit or diabolical assistance; but was bred up under the care of his poor honest parents, who were forced to earn their bread with the sweat of their brows, and so in all probability was trained up in his father's profession, that so by his daily labour he might be able to contribute to the charge of his maintenance. And yet it is plain this homebred person, sometimes only by speaking of a word, sometimes merely by the touch of his hand, sometimes by a silent virtue pro-

ceeding from him without any outward sign intervening, did more and far greater wonders in three or four years' time, than all the most skilful physicians, magicians, and mathematicians could ever do, either before or after him. Now how was it possible that such a person should ever have accomplished such great and mighty things as he did, had he not been endued with power from above? And if he was endued with such a power, what greater evidence can we desire of the truth and divinity of his doctrine? For it is not supposable that the God of truth would have endued our Saviour with this miraculous power, had that doctrine been false which he sought to confirm by it; because in so doing he would have openly patronised a cheat, and designedly contributed to the propagation of an imposture, which is utterly inconsistent with his truth and veracity: so that now the truth of Christianity finally resolves into the veracity of God, which is the foundation of all the certainty in the world. For admitting that God can either deceive or be deceived, we do not know but our faculties may be constantly imposed upon, and then there is nothing in nature that we can be certain of: so that if it be true, as St. John here testifies, that they did see the glory of our Saviour's miracles, that is a most undeniable evidence of the truth and divinity of his doctrine; and that they did see it, I think is as evident: for it is not imaginable that any single man would openly testify a known lie without some temptation inducing him thereunto; much less that so many hundreds of persons as the eyewitnesses of our Saviour's miracles were, should conspire to cheat the world, not only when they had no temptation to it, but

when they had all the reason in the world against it; for they saw their Master suffer a shameful death before their eyes, by which they might easily divine what their own fate would be, if they persevered to preach up his miracles and doctrine, which they could not resolve to do without bidding adieu to all their temporal hopes, and engaging themselves to undergo all the miseries and calamities in the world; and if they testified what they knew to be false, they transgressed the rule of their own religion, and thereby forfeited all their hopes of a blessed immortality in the life to come. And can it be imagined that so many men should at the same time unanimously agree to report and testify the miracles of a man whom they had lately seen crucified before their eyes, when they knew in their own consciences that it was all a mere forgery, and could not but foresee that, by persisting in it, they should incur an inevitable ruin in this life, and an eternal damnation in the life to come? Was there ever such a desperate piece of madness heard of from the beginning of the world to this day? And yet this monstrous thing, which is by a thousand times more incredible than any thing in the Christian religion, we must not only imagine may be, but believe that it really was; or else confess that St. John says true here, that they did see the glory of his miracles, which is so undoubted an evidence of the truth of his doctrine. Wherefore, since we are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses, let us by a lively and vigorous faith adhere to the truth of our holy religion, and then we shall find it quick and mighty through God to the casting down the strong holds of our vicious habits, and implanting in us all

those divine dispositions which are necessary to qualify us for those endless joys which our blessed Lord hath promised to and prepared for us.

3. They saw the glory of that divine and incomparable doctrine which he taught: from whence I infer the unreasonableness of men's entertaining mean and contemptible opinions of the Christian faith, since it is so excellent in itself, that it was a glory to the Son of God to be the author of it. We have a sort of men among us who would fain be accounted the wits and virtuosoes of the age, who pretend to acknowledge a God, and a providence, and all the principles of natural religion, and yet openly profess a very mean and contemptible opinion of Christianity, and take all occasions to represent it as a ridiculous fiction, fit only to be imposed upon the credulous vulgar. But I would fain know of these mighty men of reason, what plausible pretence they can urge for this their bold and blasphemous censure? Is it because Christianity is a revealed religion? or because there is any thing in it that is unworthy of God, whom we pretend to be the revealer of it? or because there wants credible evidence of its being revealed by him? If they pretend to reject it because it is a revealed religion, I would beseech them to consider how it could have comported with the goodness of God never to make any revelation of his will to the world, when the generality of men were lost in such a midnight of ignorance in respect of natural religion; how even the natural notions of the Deity were corrupted into all manner of follies and vanities, and men had formed religions, not only hateful to God, but nauseous to all that were wise among themselves; and how defective also they

were in the best and purest precepts of morality, having at last consecrated their vices, and enthroned them among the graces of religion: in which miserable state of things, it is so far from being unreasonable to expect a revelation, that it is hardly possible to vindicate God's goodness without supposing it. For should he have for ever left mankind in this bewildered state, without revelation, he would have been more wanting to man, who is the noblest of all his earthly creatures, than he is to the most contemptible animal; for to his meanest creatures he hath given sufficient ability to attain the highest end of their beings, which mankind can hardly be supposed to have in their corrupt degenerate state, without supposing a new revelation from heaven. For we have an innate notion within us of a supreme Being above us, that is superlatively good, and endued with all possible perfection; our natural reason dictates to us, that to converse with and enjoy him for ever is the highest good that we are capable of, and the most suitable to our rational natures; but by what means we may be reconciled to him in this state of revolt whereinto we are fallen, and how at length we may arrive to the enjoyment of him, could never have been sufficiently made known to us in this maze of ignorance wherein we were involved, without some divine revelation: and therefore to suppose revelation unreasonable in our miserable state and circumstances, is to suppose it unreasonable for the great and good Governor of the world to furnish his noblest creature man with sufficient means to obtain his most excellent end. And if it be acknowledged that there is a revelation, because it is so highly reasonable that there should be,

let us consider which of all the religions in the world, that pretends to be from God, is most likely to be the revelation of his will, and then I doubt not, if we impartially compare them, but our reason will soon give its vote for Christianity. If you inquire for this revelation of the enthusiastic poets of the heathen, how wild and extravagant is that religion which we find in the theology of Hesiod, the hymns of Orpheus, the odes of Pindar, and the poems of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid! If you consult the heathen oracles of Delphos, Dodona, and Jupiter Hammon, how vain and frivolous, how uncertain and fallacious, are all their responses! besides that the books and records of them are long since perished and consumed. If you inquire for this revelation in the old Roman theology, which Numa pretended to receive from his goddess Egeria, that also is lost, being burnt by the Roman senate, as Valerius Maximus tells us; for that it contained many things in it, not only destructive to the gods and religions of other countries, but also to his own and the Roman profession. Or shall we confront Christianity with the Alcoran of Mahomet, which he often pretends to have received from God? There we shall find every page almost abounding with monstrous cheats and impostures, the whole being nothing else but a confused medley of impious and contemptible fopperies, heaped together by a triumvirate of Arians, Jews, and Pagans, who were all of them known impostors in the ages wherein they lived: so that to confront Christianity with any of these, is to light up a rush candle, and resolve to outface the sun with it. For as for Christianity, it is a religion made up of the most divine and godlike

institutions; its precepts being such as are most worthy of God, enjoining nothing but what is either true godliness and most generous morality, or what are the most efficacious means and instruments of promoting them. And as for its doctrine, it partly consists of those principles of natural religion which all wise men, of whatsoever nation or religion, have owned and acknowledged; such as the existence, unity, and providence of the Godhead; the immortality of the soul, and the rewards and punishments of another life; together with the great day of accounts, wherein men shall receive according to what they have done in the flesh: and even the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is the profoundest mystery of all our religion, hath been owned and professed by the greatest and most famous philosophers that ever were. And as for those doctrines that are purely Christian, such as the birth, and life, and death, the resurrection and ascension of our Saviour, together with his sitting on the right hand of God, and coming at the last day to judge the world, they are all of them so excellently contrived to serve the great ends of religion, so wonderfully pregnant with motives and arguments to engage men to the greatest purity and goodness, that by their own native beauty and excellent contrivance they manifest themselves to be the products of a divine wisdom. So that there can be no reasonable pretence to contemn Christianity, either because it is a revealed religion, or because it contains any thing in it that is any ways unworthy of the revealer: and that there wants not sufficient evidence to demonstrate it to be the revelation of God, I have already proved in the former inference. So that after all the lewd talk of

these confident men, it is apparent there is not the least colour of reason for their impious censures of Christianity. But, alas! it is evident that the foundation of their quarrel against it lies not so much in their reason as their lusts. Christianity lays them under severe restraints, and will not permit them to be wicked in quiet, which provokes them to arm their wit, and the little reason that they have, against it, that so having baffled, or rather laughed themselves out of their religion, they may be left at liberty to play the fools and madmen without control or disturbance. And I make no doubt, but if, instead of that strict piety and virtue which Christianity enjoins, it had but indulged to them the liberties of the heathen religion, so that they could have but acted all their wickedness with devotion, sacrificed to the gods in drunken bowls, and worshipped in the arms of a strumpet, there are no men in the world would have been more zealous Christians than they. But let no man be so foolish as to imagine that he can alter the nature of things by laughing at them, or that Christianity will cease to be true, in compliance with our wicked interest and desires; no, no; things will be as they are, in despite of us, and howsoever we will please to fancy them. And if, after all our rude contempts of religion, it be found to be true, as I doubt not but it will, we shall be sensible, when it is too late, that it had been more for our safety to have played before the mouth of a cannon while it is spitting fire, or to have catched hold of a thunderbolt as it comes roaring down from the clouds, than to have played with religion, and made it the subject of our impious scorns and buffooneries.

4. And lastly, They saw the glory of his immacu-

late holiness and purity: from whence I infer, that holiness and true goodness is the greatest glory and honour to human nature. For this was the glory of the Son of God himself, when he assumed our nature, and dwelt among us; and there is nothing more glorious in Christ than his goodness; and notwithstanding those excellent doctrines that he preached, those stupendous miracles that he wrought, and that visible splendour in which he was enrobed, he had not deserved the name of a great and glorious man, if he had not been just and charitable, temperate and humble, and heavenly-minded, and eminent in all those divine and human virtues which are the proper glory and ornament of human nature. For that which makes a man more honourable than a mere animal, and advances us into the next degree of beings to angels, is our reason, by which alone we border upon the divinity, and do claim kindred with the angelical natures. That therefore which is truly our honour and glory consists in living according to that reason by which we are advanced above all sublunary natures; that is, in governing our passions and appetites, words and actions, according to those eternal rules of righteousness which right reason dictates to us; and if, instead of doing thus, we wholly resign up ourselves to the dominion of our brutish and unreasonable inclinations, we thereby render ourselves more despicable and infamous than the most beastly brutes in all the creation; and even those goats and wolves, and swine and tigers, whom we resemble in our beastly manners, could they see our shame, would doubtlessly hiss at us, and reproach us for greater beasts than themselves; for they all live up to the best of

their natures, and regularly pursue the highest end for which they were created; whereas we, who are allied to the noblest of beings, and are created and designed for the most glorious ends, do by our base and unreasonable condescensions shamefully undervalue ourselves, in pursuing no ends but what are extremely unworthy of us: so that it had been much more for our honour and reputation to have assumed the shape and nature of brutes, when we assumed their manners and customs; for then our actions would have very well become us, and neither God nor men could have justly upbraided us for them. But to lead the lives of brutes, in the shape and nature of men, is monstrous; it is to advance the beast above the man, to place our heels where nature hath placed our head, and become our own reverse and antipodes.

DISCOURSE XXV.

UPON

JOHN V. 39.

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life.

BY *the scriptures* here must be meant the Old Testament; for as yet the greatest part of the New was unrevealed, and the whole of it unwritten. They were those very scriptures which the unbelieving Jews, to whom our Saviour was now preaching, owned and acknowledged to be the word of God; *for in them*, says our Saviour, *ye think ye have eternal life;* which it is certain they did not think of any other scriptures, but only those of the Old Testament; *and they are they*, says he, *which testify of me.* And to be sure, there were no other scriptures which could testify of Christ to the unbelieving Jews, but only those of Moses and the prophets, these being the only scriptures whose testimony they credited. But yet the reason which our Saviour urges, to move them to read the Old Testament, doth as much oblige us to read the New as well as the Old, as it did them to read the Old; *for in them ye think ye have eternal life;* that is, in them ye think ye have eternal life promised, and all the necessaries to be believed and done by you, in order to your obtaining it, proposed to you. And indeed as they thought, so it was; they had eternal life proposed to them in hieroglyphics; for that was

the mystery of their holy of holies, that was the interpretation of their land of Canaan, and the spiritual sense of all their general promises of good things to come: they had all the articles of faith, and all the instances of duty that were necessary to their attainment of eternal life, exhibited to them in the writings of their prophets, and the types and figures of their law. For it was by this rule alone that all the holy men of the Jewish nation did live and believe; and either this was sufficient to guide and direct them to eternal life, or they were left under a fatal necessity of falling short of it: it was *the law of the Lord* that did *enlighten their eyes, and rejoice their hearts, and convert their souls;* and it was *in keeping it* that they found *great reward,* Psalm xix. 7, 8, 11. And therefore either they fell short of the reward of eternal life, notwithstanding this their illumination and conversion, or they found it in keeping that law by which they were illuminated and converted; and if in keeping their law they found eternal life, then it is certain that in their law they had it. So that these words of our Saviour, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life,* do not imply that they were mistaken in thinking so; or at least they only imply that they were mistaken in thinking to obtain eternal life by adhering to the prime and literal sense of their law, without pursuing the mystery and spiritual meaning of it; which was indeed the error of the Pharisees, with whom our Saviour is here discoursing. For the internal sense and mystery of their law was the gospel, all whose articles of faith and precepts of duty were (though darkly and obscurely) expressed and represented in the types and figures of the Mosaic insti-

tution. And hence the apostle tells, that both the priests and their oblations did *serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things*, Heb. viii. 5. So that the heavenly things contained in the gospel were the substantial ideas which those legal types and patterns contained and represented; and the same author calls that law *a shadow of good things to come*, Heb. x. 1. that is, it was an obscure scheme or prefiguration of the mercies of the gospel, of which eternal life is a principal part. Since therefore the law was nothing else but only the gospel in dark and obscure ciphers, if in this we Christians have eternal life, in that the Jews had it also: and therefore the reason which our Saviour here urges to oblige the Jews to *search the scriptures* of the Old Testament, (*for in them ye think ye have eternal life,*) doth at least equally oblige us Christians to search the scriptures both of the Old and New. For if they had just reason to think they had eternal life in the Old Testament, and were thereupon obliged to search into it, we have rather more reason to think that we have eternal life in the New, since the New Testament is nothing else but only the Old deciphered and unriddled; and therefore we must not only have eternal life in this, as they had in that, but we must also have it far more expressly than they. In the prosecution of this argument, therefore, I shall endeavour these two things:

I. To shew you that in the holy scriptures we have eternal life.

II. That this is a very forcible reason to oblige us to search them.

I. First, that in the holy scriptures we have eternal life; that is, that in them we have eternal life

proposed to us, together with all that is necessary to be believed and practised by us in order to our obtaining it; or, in other words, that the holy scripture is a sufficient rule both of faith and manners to guide and direct us to eternal happiness. And this is one article of the faith of the church of England, which we are required to explain to the people; for so in her sixth article our church professes, "that the "holy scripture containeth all things necessary to "salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, "or may be proved thence, is not required of any "man that it should be believed as an article of "faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to sal-"vation." Now to make the scripture a sufficient rule as to all things necessary to salvation, there are two things necessary; first, that it should be full; and secondly, that it should be clear: both which the holy scripture is in an eminent degree, as containing in it all that is necessary to be believed and done in order to eternal life. And this will evidently appear from these three following propositions:

1. That the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the scripture with all that is necessary to eternal life.

2. That they preached to the world all those necessaries with which the Holy Spirit inspired them.

3. That all those necessary truths which they preached are comprehended in those sacred writings of theirs, of which the holy scripture consists.

1. That the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the scripture with all that is necessary to eternal life. For first, our Saviour, by whom they were originally instructed, declares, that as *the Father loved him, and shewed him all things that himself did,*

John v. 20. so *he had made known to them all things that he had heard of his Father*, John xvii. 8. And then, when he went from them, and ceased to instruct them in his own person, he promised that by his Spirit he would *teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them*, John xiv. 26. and that by the same Spirit he would *guide them into all truth*, John xvi. 13. If therefore the Spirit did perform this promise to them, (as there is no doubt but he did,) then we are sure that he did teach them over again whatsoever Christ had taught them before; and if Christ had taught them whatsoever he had heard of his Father, (as he declares he had,) then it is certain either that he taught them all things necessary to eternal life, or that he himself had not heard from his Father all things that are necessary thereunto.

2. That as they were taught by the Spirit all things necessary to eternal life, so what they were taught they preached and delivered to the world. For so our Saviour commanded them to go forth into all the world, and *teach all nations to observe all* those *things which he had commanded* them, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. which injunction of his they strictly observed; for so we are told, that in obedience to it, *they went forth, and preached every where*, Mark xvi. 20. And that their preaching extended to all things necessary to salvation, is evident from their own testimony: for thus St. Paul tells the Ephesians, that he had *not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God*, Acts xx. 27. And to be sure in *the whole counsel of God* all that is necessary to salvation must be included. And concerning that gospel which he had preached to the Corin-

thians, he thus pronounces, *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain*, 1 Cor. xv. 2. But how could they be saved by that gospel he preached to them, unless it contained in it all things necessary to salvation? And this very gospel which the apostles in their constant ministry proposed to the world, St. James calls *the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls*, James i. 21. And for the same reason it is also called *the word of reconciliation*, 2 Cor. v. 19. *the word of salvation*, Acts xiii. 26. and *the word of life*, Acts v. 20. and *the savour of life unto life*, 2 Cor. ii. 16. and also *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes*, Rom. i. 16. Neither of which it could be justly styled, supposing it to be defective in any thing necessary to the eternal happiness of men.

3. And lastly, That all those necessary truths which they preached are comprehended in those writings of theirs, of which the holy scripture consists. It is true, before the Christian doctrine was collected into those scriptures of which the New Testament now consists, it was all conveyed by oral tradition from the mouths of the teachers to the ears of the disciples; but in a little time those holy men who first preached it found an absolute necessity of committing it to writing, as a much surer way of preserving it uncorrupted, and transmitting it down to all succeeding generations; for thus Eusebius tells us [b], "That the Romans, not being satisfied with St. "Peter's preaching of Christianity to them, earnestly "desired St. Mark, his companion, that he would "leave them in writing a standing monument of

[b] Hist. Eccles. l. ii. c. 15.

"that doctrine which St. Peter had delivered to them "by word of mouth; which was the occasion," says he, "of the writing of St. Mark's gospel: which thing "St. Peter understanding by a revelation of the Spirit, "being highly pleased with their earnest desire, he "confirmed it by his own authority, that it might af-"terwards be read in the churches." It seems in those days the Romans did not think oral or unwritten traditions a sufficient conservatory of divine truths, nor did their bishops then forbid the reading of the scriptures to the laity in their own language. After which he tells us[c], that "St. Matthew and St. "John were the only disciples of our Lord who had "left written commentaries of the things which they "had preached behind them; and it was," says he, "necessity that impelled them to write. For Mat-"thew having preached the faith to the Hebrews, "and intending to go from them to other nations, "wrote his gospel in his own country language, that "thereby he might supply the want of his presence "to those whom he left behind him. And after-"wards, when Mark and Luke had published their "gospels, John, who had hitherto only preached the "gospel by word of mouth, being at length moved "by the same reason, betook himself to write. And "the three former gospels," says he, "arriving to the "knowledge of all men, and particularly of St. John, "he approved them, and with his own testimony "confirmed the truth of them." From which relation it is evident, that that which moved those holy men to commit their gospels to writing was this, that they judged it necessary for the conservation of the Christian doctrine, that so these in their absence

[c] L. iii. c. 24.

might be standing monuments of the faith, to preach that gospel to men's eyes which they had preached to their ears; and if they wrote to preserve the faith, to be sure they would leave no necessary or essential part of it unwritten. There are several propositions in these gospels which, though very useful, are far from being essential parts of Christianity; and can we imagine that those holy men, who wrote on purpose to conserve Christianity, should take so much care to write many things which are not necessary parts, and in the mean time omit any things that are? Eusebius tells us of St. Mark in particular, ἑνὸς γὰρ ἐποιήσατο πρόνοιαν τοῦ μηδὲν ὧν ἤκουσε παραλιπεῖν, ἢ ψεύσασθαι τὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς, i. e. "he took great care of this "more especially, not to pretermit any of those things "which he had heard, (even from St. Peter,) nor "to affix any thing to them that was false:" and if he were so careful not to omit any thing, to be sure he would be particularly careful not to omit any thing which he judged necessary to the eternal happiness of men. But what need we depend upon human authority, when as, if we consult those sacred writings themselves, (which, so far as they go, all Christians allow to be the word of God,) we shall find they give this testimony of themselves, that they comprehend in them all things necessary to eternal life. For thus the writers of the New Testament testify of the Old, that they *are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ*, 2 Tim. iii. 15. And if the Old Testament alone was able to do this, then much more the Old and New together: but how could they make men *wise to salvation*, if they were defective in any article that is necessary to salvation? And then the same author goes on and tells

us, that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*, verse 16, 17. And if the Old Scriptures were sufficient *to make the man of God perfect*, and to *furnish him throughly unto all good works*, one would think that the New and Old together should not be defective. For that the scriptures of the New Testament, as well as of the Old, contain in them all things necessary to eternal life, they themselves do plainly testify of themselves: for thus St. Luke in the beginning of his gospel tells his Theophilus, to whom he writes, that *forasmuch as many had set forth a declaration of those things that were surely believed among Christians, it seemed good unto him also, having had a perfect understanding of all things from the first, to write them down in order, that he might know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed.* From whence I infer, that supposing St. Luke performed what he promised, his gospel must contain a full declaration of the Christian religion: for, first, By promising to give an account of those things which were surely believed among Christians, he engaged himself to give an entire account of Christianity, unless we will suppose that there were some parts of Christianity which the Christians of that time did not surely believe. 2dly, In promising to give an account of those things of which he had a perfect understanding from the first, and in which his Theophilus had been instructed, he also engages himself to give a complete account of the whole religion, unless we will suppose that there were some

parts of this religion which St. Luke did not perfectly understand, and in which Theophilus had not been before instructed. Thus also St. John testifies of his gospel, chap. xx. 31. *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* And if it be objected that by *these things* the apostle only means the miracles of Christ, which are the motives of our belief, and not his doctrines which are to be believed by us; this is notoriously false, since by *these things* St. John means his gospel, in which not only the miracles, but the doctrines of Christ are contained; and therefore in his first epistle, chap. v. 13. he saith, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe,* or continue to believe, *on the name of the Son of God;* where by *these things* it is plain he means only that Christian doctrine which he had been teaching throughout the whole epistle. From which two places I argue, that all things necessary to eternal life are written, because he expressly tells us, that *these things* were written to this end, that they might beget and nourish in us that faith by which we may obtain eternal life; but if that faith which these written things was designed to beget in us be not sufficient to eternal life, then were these things written in vain, and the end of writing them, which was that we might obtain eternal life, by believing them, was wholly frustrated; but if that faith were sufficient to eternal life, then these written things which begot that faith, and were the object of it, must contain in them all things necessary to eternal life; for how can they beget in us

a faith that is sufficient to eternal life, unless they propose to our faith all things that are necessary thereunto?

And thus I have endeavoured to demonstrate from scripture itself, which all agree is the word of God, and consequently the most concluding authority in the world, that the holy scripture is in itself a sufficient rule of faith and manners to direct men to eternal life. And if this be so, I would fain know by what warrant or authority any man or church can pretend to obtrude upon the faith of Christians any unwritten traditions, or doctrines of faith, and rules of worship, not recorded in scripture, as of equal authority with those recorded in scripture, and equally necessary to the eternal happiness of men. For that there have been such bold imposers in the Christian world, Irenæus assures us in the second chapter of his second book against Heresies; where he tells us of a sort of heretics who taught, "that "the truth could not be found in the scriptures by "those to whom tradition was unknown; forasmuch "as it was not delivered by writing, but by word "of mouth." And these heretics [c], as Tertullian observes, "confessed indeed that the apostles were ig-"norant, and that they did not at all differ among "themselves in their preaching, but said they re-"vealed not all things unto all men; some things "they taught openly and to all, some things secretly, "and to a few; which secret things were the un-"written traditions which they sought to impose "upon the faith of Christians." And how far the church of Rome itself doth in this matter tread in the footsteps of these ancient heretics, is but too

[c] De Præscrip. Hæret. c. 25.

notorious: for thus in the preface of their Catechism, it is expressly affirmed by the council of Trent, "that the whole doctrine to be delivered to the "faithful is contained in the word of God, which "word of God is distributed into scripture and tra-"dition." And in the council itself they declare, and define, "that the books of scripture and unwrit-"ten traditions are to be received and honoured "with equal pious affection and reverence." In which words they expressly own another word of God besides the scripture, viz. tradition, which they equalize with the scripture itself. And this is almost verbatim the very assertion which both Irenæus and Tertullian condemn for heresy; and as they are the same, so we find they are grounded on the same authority: for those very texts of scripture which those ancient heretics urged for their tradition, are urged by Bellarmine for the tradition of his church. Thus for their tradition, as Irenæus and Tertullian acquaint us, they urged that of St. Paul, *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect;* and also, *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust;* and again, *That good thing which is committed to thee, keep:* all which texts are urged by Bellarmine in his fourth and fifth books *de Verbo Dei*, in behalf of that tradition which the church of Rome contends for: and it is something hard, that that which was damned for heresy in the primitive church should be made an article of faith in the present Roman. Not that we do disallow of traditions universally received in all churches and ages; for we frankly acknowledge that what is now contained in scripture was tradition before it was scripture, as being first delivered by word of mouth before it was collected

into writing; and therefore, whensoever it can be made evident to us that there are any unwritten doctrines bearing the same stamp of divine authority with those that are written, we are ready to receive them with the same veneration as we do the scriptures themselves. For it is not their being written that doth authorize them, but their being from God, and our Saviour, and his apostles; and therefore, when once it is made appear to us that Christ or his apostles taught so and so, that is sufficient to command our assent and submission, whether it be made appear from scripture or tradition. So that the reason why we embrace some doctrines and reject others, is not merely because the one are written and the other not; but because to us, who live at so great a distance from Christ and his apostles, it can never be made so evident, that what is not written was taught by them, as what is. What is written hath been delivered down to us by the unanimous tradition and testimony of the church of Christ in all ages, which I am sure can never be justly pretended of any one of those unwritten traditions which the church of Rome now imposes upon the faith of Christians. Let them but produce the same unanimous testimony, that any one of those twelve articles which they have thought meet to superadd to the ancient creeds was taught by Christ or his apostles, as we do that what is contained in scripture was so, and we will as readily embrace it as any proposition in scripture; but if this article be neither to be found in scripture, nor delivered down to us as taught by Christ or his apostles, by the unanimous testimony of the church of Christ through all ages, we must crave their pardon, if we cannot receive it as part of

the word of God. But how impossible it is to prove, by the unanimous testimony of the church, that any unwritten doctrine is part of the word of God necessary to be believed by all Christians, is evident from hence, because for several ages after our Saviour the church unanimously taught, that whatsoever was necessary to be believed was contained in scripture; and for the same church at the same time to testify that this or that unwritten doctrine is a part of God's word necessary to be believed, and yet that all doctrines necessary to be believed are written, is plainly to contradict itself. And yet we find the primitive fathers unanimously attesting, that the scripture is the rule from whence we draw all the assertions of our faith, the last will and testimony of our Saviour, by which all controversies are to be decided, the boundaries of the church, out of which it is not to depart, the touchstone of truth, the foundation and pillar of our faith for the time to come, and the only certain principle of Christian doctrine and demonstration in matters of faith. These are their own expressions, and abundance more than these we meet with to the same purpose; and, which is very observable, they not only assert the scripture to be a full and adequate rule of faith, but severely declaim against all additions to it. Thus Eusebius Pamphilus, in the name of the fathers of the council of Nice, Τοῖς γεγραμμένοις πιστεύε, τὰ μὴ γεγραμμένα μὴ ἐννοίει μηδὲ ζήτει; i. e. "Those things which are written, "believe; those things which are not written, neither think upon nor inquire after." Thus also St. Austin, *Quicquid inde audieritis e scriptura sacra, hoc vobis bene sapiat; quicquid extra est, respuite, ne erretis in nebula:* "Whatsoever ye hear from

" the holy scriptures, let it savour well with you; " whatsoever is without them, refuse, lest ye wander " in a cloud." St. Basil declares, " That it is a ma- " nifest falling from the faith, and an argument of " arrogancy either to reject any point of those things " that are written, or to bring in any of those which " are not written; and that it is the property of a " faithful man to be fully persuaded of the truth of " those things that are delivered in the holy scrip- " ture, and not to dare either to reject or to add " any thing thereunto." Thus Tertullian *advers. Hermog. Si enim non est scriptum, timeat væ illud adjicientibus aut detrahentibus destinatum:* " If " what he pretends be not written, let him fear that " woe that is denounced against such as add or take " away." What likelihood therefore is there that they who thus severely forbid adding any thing to the written word of God, did ever so much as dream of another word of God consisting of unwritten traditions? And indeed methinks it is very strange, if there had been any other word of God besides what is written, there should no notice be taken of it in that which is written; especially considering that if it be as necessary to be believed as the Roman church defines it, it is as necessary that we should have direction where to find it, and how to know it when we have it; but of this we have not the least intimation in scripture. For as for those words of St. Paul, 2 Thess. ii. 15. *Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle;* all that can be justly inferred from them is only this, that the Thessalonians at the writing of this epistle had only an oral tradi-

tion of a great part of that gospel which St. Paul had preached to them, the gospels being as yet either not collected into writing, or not dispersed abroad into the churches; so that then this, and his former epistle to them, were perhaps the only written part of the New Testament that was yet arrived to their hands; and if so, then this command of holding the traditions by word did oblige no longer than till they had received the written gospel; because then those traditions by word were all recorded in scripture, and being there recorded, they were thenceforth obliged to hold them as scripture, and no longer as traditions by word. But supposing there are still unwritten traditions in the church that are not in scripture, but yet were delivered by Christ or his apostles, and so are equally the word of God with the scripture; I would fain know how we, who live at so great a distance from Christ and his apostles, should either know where to find, or be assured that they are such when we have them. We know very well that even in the primitive ages there were sundry counterfeit traditions which heretics pretended to derive from Christ and his apostles; and if it were so easy a matter to counterfeit traditions then, how much more easy is it now? I confess Vincentius Lirinensis gives us a very good rule how to distinguish counterfeit from true traditions; *Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est, hoc est vere proprieque catholicum;* "That which was "every where, and always, and by all Christians be-"lieved, that is truly and properly catholic." And by this rule we are willing to abide; if they can shew us any article of Christianity not recorded in

scripture, which hath been every where and always believed by all Christians, we will readily admit it as an unwritten word of God, and with the same respect and reverence as we do that which is written. But this we are fully assured they will never be able to perform, seeing, as was shewn before, the primitive church doth with one consent attest the scripture to be an entire rule of faith, in which all the articles of Christianity are contained.

But we are told, that for these unwritten traditions we must rely upon the present church of every age, and receive as a divine tradition whatsoever she defines to be so: where by the present church is meant the present Roman church; that is to say, whatsoever this church defines we must believe it, because she defines it; which we cannot but think is a hard case; first, because we know very well that the Roman church is at best but a part of the church universal, and we know no right that any part hath to impose upon the whole, and to oblige it to believe whatsoever she proposes, merely because she proposes it. Secondly, Because in fact we are very well assured, that the Roman church is so far from being a sincere preserver of tradition, that there is no church in the world hath more studiously attempted to counterfeit and deprave it; of which innumerable instances are given by our authors, many of which are now acknowledged even by their authors to be true. For even their vulgar Latin edition of the Bible itself, which they prefer before the originals, is confessed by themselves to abound with manifest errors and corruptions; and even to the very canon of the Bible they have added sundry apocryphal books, which we certainly know the primitive tradition

never admitted as parts of the sacred scripture; and it is notorious to all the world, how many books and writings they have forged, and how many of the writings of the ancients they have gelded and interpolated, to defend and support those pretended traditions which they have imposed upon the world as articles of faith. And after she hath been guilty of so many apparent falsifications, we cannot but think it a very hard case that we should still be obliged to believe her upon her own bare word. For, in the third place, at this rate of proceeding, we must in many instances condemn the traditions of the primitive church, in compliment to those of the present Roman; which, if we believe our own eyes, and the most authentic histories and records of those times, do expressly thwart and contradict one another; and since, if we would never so fain, we can never believe both parts of a contradiction, we must in believing the one give the lie to the other. Nay, fourthly and lastly, though we should be persuaded, as we think we have reason to be, that many of the traditions of the present church of Rome are not only not mentioned in scripture, but directly contrary to it; (as for instance, their performing divine service in an unknown tongue, which we think is as contrary to 1 Cor. xiv. as one proposition can be to another;) yet if that church's definitions do by their own authority oblige our faith, we must believe her against scripture itself. And this we think intolerable, that any church or Christian should be obliged to believe the unwritten word of the church of Rome in a matter wherein, upon the most diligent and impartial search, they are verily persuaded it contradicts the written word of God; and if the sen-

tence of the one or the other must be made void, we think it is very reasonable that the voice of her pretended unwritten word should be silenced by that more certain one of the lively oracles of God. But after all, if what I have endeavoured to prove be proved, viz. that the holy scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith and manners to conduct us to eternal life, this will be enough to evacuate all that is pretended for this unwritten word of God. For God and nature we know do nothing in vain; and therefore, if one word of God be sufficient, viz. that which is written, what need have we of this other, which is unwritten? And so I have done with the first necessary property of a rule of faith, viz. that it be full; and shewn at large that the holy scripture is so as to all things necessary to salvation; and therefore shall now proceed to,

II. The second, viz. That it be clear and intelligible to those whose faith and manners are to be regulated by it.

I do not mean, when I say that the scripture is clear, and plain, and intelligible to all those to whom it is a rule of faith and manners, that it is throughout so in all its proposals. For it cannot be denied but there are many things, not only in St. Paul's Epistles, but also in other parts of scripture, *hard to be understood*, and such as do not only exceed the apprehension of common capacities, but also puzzle the understandings of the most acute and profound inquirers. But that which I assert is this, that all those doctrines of faith and rules of manners, which are necessary for men to believe and practise in order to their attainment of eternal life, are so plainly and clearly revealed in scripture, that there

is no honest teachable mind, that is capable of understanding common sense, but may from thence receive full information of them upon faithful and diligent inquiry. And though in some texts these necessaries are not so plainly proposed as in others, yet in some text or other they are all of them so plainly proposed, that no man can read the scripture and still be ignorant of them, without being wilfully blind; for which there is no remedy either in the scripture or out of it. And this I shall endeavour to prove,

1. From the express testimony of scripture.

2. From the avowed design of writing the scripture.

3. From the frequent commands God lays upon us to read the scripture.

4. From the obligation that lies upon us, under pain of damnation, to believe and receive all those necessaries to salvation contained in it.

1. From the express testimony of scripture it is evident, that, in all things necessary to salvation at least, the scripture is clear and plain. For to be sure if in any thing the scripture be plain, it is in those things that are most necessary to be believed and known; and therefore, if it be obscure in these things, we may reasonably presume it is plain in nothing: but that it is in many things plain and easy to be understood, is evident from its own testimony: for thus of the Mosaic law it is expressly affirmed by Moses, *This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.* Deut. xxx. 11. where Moses speaks not only of the Ten Commandments, which consisting for the most part of laws of nature, are upon that ac-

count more easy to be understood, but of all the commandments of Moses in general, whether ceremonial, judicial, or natural. For so, ver. 16. this commandment, we find, contains as well the statutes and judgments, as the commandments of the law, all which must take in the whole Mosaic institution. And accordingly, Psalm cxix. 105. David calls this word of God, *a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path;* which how could it be, if it did not burn clear enough to guide and direct him? And if it did, then to be sure it burnt clear enough to direct him in those things wherein it was most necessary for him to be directed. Again, in the 19th Psalm, ver. 7, 8. we are told, that *the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple:* and that *the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.* But how can any law make the simple wise, or enlighten the eyes of men, unless it be so plainly and clearly delivered, as that the simple may be capable of apprehending, and the eyes of men of discerning the sense of it? I know it is objected by Bellarmine, that these words do only imply, that this law indeed being understood doth enlighten men's eyes, and direct their practice; but by no means that it is plain and easy to be understood. But this is a mere cavil; for it is plain, that it is by understanding the law that the simple are made wise, and the eyes of men enlightened. If therefore this law be so obscure in itself, as that it cannot make itself understood by all that sincerely inquire into it, how is it possible that it should make them wise, or enlighten the eyes of their minds? But it is plain, that the intent of those passages of David was to excite and encourage men to study and observe the law: but

what though the law makes the simple wise, when they understand it; what encouragement is this for the simple to study it, if it be so obscure that they cannot understand it? And since they must understand it before they can observe it, what encouragement doth this consideration give them to observe it, that it will make them wise when they understand it, if it be not plain enough for them to understand it? But then that forecited passage of Moses doth in express words contradict this cavil of Bellarmine; for he tells the people, that *the commandment he gave them was not hidden from them;* whereas, if it had been so obscurely delivered to them by Moses, that upon their sincere and diligent inquiry they could not understand it, it is certain that it had been still hidden from them, how wise soever it might make them when they did understand it: and to say that such a proposition will make me wise when I do understand it, is no argument at all that it is not hidden from me, if it be so obscurely expressed, as that upon my sincere inquiry I am not capable of understanding it. But that the Old Testament, at least in all necessary matters, was plain enough even to common capacities, is evident from the frequent appeals our Saviour makes to it in his contests with the common people of the Jews. Thus in the text he bids them, *Search the scriptures, for they are they which testify of me;* and in other places, *What saith the scripture?* and, *Doth not the scripture* say so and so? Now how impertinent would it have been for our Saviour thus to appeal to it at the tribunal of the people, if he thought it so obscure that the people were not capable of understanding it! How trifling would it be

for a man to appeal to Suarez's Metaphysics in a controversy with a ploughman, or to refer him to Euclid's Elements for the determining the bounds and measures of a field!

And as, from what hath been said, it is apparent that the scriptures of the Old Testament were, at least in all necessaries, plain and clear to the Jews; so it is no less evident that the scriptures of the New Testament are so to Christians, since it gives the same testimony to itself of its own clearness as the Old Testament doth. For thus, 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4. the apostle tells us, that they did not *handle the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to men's consciences in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* Supposing then that they wrote with the same plainness and clearness with which they spake, (which there is no shadow of reason to doubt of,) then from these words it is evident, first, That they did neither in their preaching nor writings affect to discourse dubiously or obscurely, but that their great design was so to manifest and make known the truth, as that by their plainness and simplicity they might recommend themselves to the consciences of all that heard or read them. Secondly, That in fact they had in their sermons and writings so clearly taught the gospel, that if, after all, it remained hidden or obscure to any, it was only to such as were lost and irrecoverable. Thirdly, That that which rendered the gospel which they had

taught and written hidden or obscure to such, was not the obscurity either of the matter which they taught, or of their manner of teaching it, but their own worldly affections which blinded their eyes, and hindered them from seeing that which in itself was illustriously visible: which is an unanswerable evidence of the clearness and plainness of the scriptures of the New Testament in all necessary things; for if they are clear to all but such as wilfully shut their eyes against them, they are as clear as they need be to honest and teachable minds; for there is nothing can be clear enough to such as are not willing to understand. And accordingly the gospel, which the apostle calls *the grace of God which bringeth salvation*, is said to *have appeared*, or shone forth, *to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. Now if the gospel did shine forth unto all men, it must be in the sermons and discourses of those that had preached it to the world; and if they so preached it as that it shone forth to all men, they must necessarily have preached it very plainly and clearly: either therefore it was wrote as it was preached, or it was not; if it was not, it was not wrote truly and sincerely; if it was, it was wrote very plainly, so as to make it appear and shine forth to all that read it. It is true, there are some things obscure both in the Old Scriptures and New; but then these are such things as are no parts of the necessaries and essentials of religion; such things as men may be safely ignorant of, or be mistaken about, without any hazard of their eternal life. For all that the forecited testimonies prove is only this, that that true religion

by which God governs the faith and manners of men, is, so far forth as it is necessary to be believed and practised, plainly and clearly revealed to them in the holy scriptures. But besides this, all men agree there are a great many other things revealed in holy scripture, which, because they are not necessary for all men to understand, are many of them not so plainly revealed as that all men may understand them. But since the scripture was written to teach and instruct men, to be sure it teaches them most plainly that which is most necessary for them to know; and therefore, since there are some things plainly taught in scripture, as is evident to any one that reads it, to be sure among these things are contained all that is necessary for men to know and understand.

2. From the avowed design of writing the scripture it is also evident, that in all things necessary it is plain and clear. For thus, concerning the Old Testament, St. Paul tells us, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*, Rom. xv. 4. And if they were written for our learning and instruction, to be sure they were so written as to teach and instruct us, that is, plainly and clearly, especially as to those things wherein we have most need to be instructed. And then, as for the New Testament, St. Luke tells his Theophilus, that the reason of his writing his Gospel was, that he might know the certainty of those things that were surely believed among Christians, and wherein he himself had been instructed; and if it were to ascertain us of the principles of Christianity that he wrote his Gospel, certainly he would take

care to write it after such a manner, as that those that read it might understand it, otherwise he must run counter to his own design. Thus also St. John saith, that he wrote his Gospel that men might *believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God;* but how could his Gospel induce men to believe this, unless it be so written as that men may understand it? And so also for his Epistles he tells us, that he wrote them that *they that believed in Jesus might know that they have eternal life, and that they may believe,* or continue to believe, *on the name of the Son of God:* and if this were his end, to be sure he would take care to write so as that they might understand; otherwise how could they know by his writing that they had eternal life, or be moved thereby to continue to believe on the name of Jesus? for there is nothing can create in men either knowledge or faith, but what they understand. Seeing therefore the great end of writing the scripture was to instruct the world in the great things of religion, either we must say that both the writers of the scripture, and the Holy Ghost that inspired them, were defective in skill or in care so to write as to obtain this end; or that their writings are an effectual means to obtain it, which it is impossible for them to be, unless they are plain and clear as to the great things of religion. In short, every wise agent pursues his end by the most proper and effectual means; and I would fain know, whether to write plainly or obscurely be the most proper means to instruct men by writing; if to write plainly, then either the apostles wrote so, or they were not wise agents, since to instruct was the great end of their writing. The most natural way of conveying to men's minds

the notices of things, is by words either spoken or written; and seeing whatsoever can be spoken in plain and intelligible words may be written in the same words, there can be no doubt but those words will be as intelligible when they are written as when they are spoken: for why should the same words be more obscure when conveyed to us by our eyes, than when conveyed to us by our ears? Seeing then the sense of scripture may be as plainly conveyed by words written as by words spoken, and seeing that even those who deny the plainness of scripture do yet allow that the sense of it may be plainly conveyed by words spoken, or, which is the same thing, oral tradition; if the scripture be not plain, it can be resolved into no other reason but this, that God would not have it so; for there is no doubt but he could have spoken as plainly as men, and have written as plainly as he spoke; and therefore, if he hath not done so, it was because he would not; but to say that he would not write those things plainly which he thought necessary for all men to know, and which he wrote on purpose that all men might know, is to say that he would and would not at the same time; or that he wrote them on purpose that men might know them, and yet that he wrote so as that they might not know them.

3. From the frequent commands God lays upon us to read the scripture, it is also evident that in all necessary things it is plain and clear. That God doth not only allow, but will and require us to read the scripture, I shall shew at large hereafter, when I come to treat of searching the scripture. Supposing therefore at present the thing be true, I would fain know to what purpose should God require us to

read the scripture, if in those things which are necessary for men to know and believe, it be not plain and intelligible. Doth God require us to read it for the sake of reading it, or for the sake of understanding it? if the former, reading any other book might as well have answered God's end as reading the scripture; because reading is reading, whatsoever it be that we read: if the latter, then either the scripture is plain and intelligible, as to all those things which he requires us to understand, or he requires us to read it in vain. For to what purpose should we read that we may understand, if that which we are to read be not plain enough to be understood by us? As for instance, the Bereans, Acts xvii. 11. are highly commended for *searching the scriptures daily;* now I would fain know, was this a virtue in them, or was it not? If not, why are they commended for it; if it were, it was certainly their duty. What was the intendment of it? was it only that they might be expert readers? Why are they so commended for reading the scriptures above any other book, seeing that reading any other book would have done as well for that purpose as reading the scriptures? But the text itself tells us, that the intendment of their reading the scripture was, *that they might know whether those things were so* or no which St. Paul had preached to them; but how should they know this by reading the scripture, if the scripture which they read were not plain enough to be understood by them? Again, St. Paul gives this as a great commendation of his son Timothy, that *from a child he had known the holy scriptures;* whence by the way we may learn, that it is not so great a reproach to our church as the Romanists in-

tend it for, that we permit women and children, tinkers and cobblers, to read the scripture. But I pray, what was the meaning of Timothy's knowing the *holy scripture from a child?* Was it that he knew the words of it only, or the sense of it also? If the former, a parrot may be taught as much as Timothy had learned, and consequently deserve as high a commendation as he; if the latter, then it seems the scripture is plain enough for a well-disposed child to know the sense of it, so far forth at least as it is necessary to be known; and this is as much as we desire. If therefore God requires us to read the scripture, as Timothy did, to the end that we may know and understand it as he did, then either we may understand the sense of it by reading it, or else God requires us to read it in vain.

4. And lastly, From the obligation we lie under upon pain of damnation to believe and receive those necessaries to salvation contained in scripture, it is also evident, that as to all those necessaries it is plain and clear. That we are obliged to believe, under pain of damnation, all that the scripture proposes as necessary to our salvation, is agreed on all hands; but how can men be justly obliged to believe such things as are obscure, and doubtful, and uncertain, and of which they can have no certain knowledge? Either the necessaries to salvation must be plainly and clearly expressed in scripture, or we have not sufficient reason to believe them; and to say God will damn us for not believing those things which he hath not given us sufficient reason to believe, is to charge him with the most outrageous oppression and injustice. But we are told, that though God

hath not clearly revealed to us in scripture those things which he hath obliged us to believe upon pain of damnation, yet he hath left us sufficient reason to believe them; for he hath left us to the conduct of an infallible church, that is to say, of the present church of Rome in all ages, whom he hath authorized to explain and define to us all things that are necessary to be believed, which we are to receive upon her authority, and not upon the scriptures; so that if we firmly believe what she defines and proposes to us, we are sure to believe all things that are necessary to be believed. Now in answer to this objection, which indeed is the great foundation that the faith of those of the present church of Rome relies on, I desire these things may be seriously considered:

1. That before we can reasonably rely upon the authority of the present church of Rome, in defining and proposing to us the articles of our faith, there are sundry things that we must believe upon the authority of scripture.

2. That these things which we must believe from scripture, before we can rely upon the authority of that church, are at least as obscurely revealed in scripture as any other article of our Christian faith.

3. That after all these things, upon our relying on that church's authority, we are left to the same or greater uncertainties than upon our relying upon the authority of scripture.

4. That in relying upon the authority of the scripture, we are left to no other uncertainties than just what is necessary to render our faith virtuous and rewardable; whereas by relying upon the authority

of that church, supposing it to be a certain ground, as it is pretended, our faith would have little or nothing of virtue in it.

1. That before we can reasonably rely upon the authority of that church, in defining and proposing to us the articles of our faith, there are sundry things that we must believe upon the authority of scripture. As for instance, we must in the first place believe that there is a church, or society of Christians separated from the world, or incorporated by a peculiar divine charter. Now whether there be such a church or no, is a question that must be resolved by the scripture, and not by the church; because to believe that there is a church, because the church saith there is a church, is to take that for granted which is the thing in question. Secondly, We must believe that this church hath authority to define and propose to us the articles of our faith, which must also for the same reason be believed on the authority of the scripture, and not of the church. For to believe that there is a church that hath authority to propose to us the articles of our faith, is to believe that there is a church which we are obliged to believe; and how can I believe this upon the church's authority, unless I can believe it before I do believe it? Thirdly, Before we can rely upon this church's authority in defining and proposing to us the articles of our faith, we must believe that this church is infallible; for if she be not infallible, how is it consistent with the truth of God to oblige us to believe her, seeing in so doing he must oblige us whensoever she errs to believe her errors? But that she is infallible is not to be believed upon her own authority, for then her infallible authority must be

the reason of our belief that she is infallible; that is, we must believe her infallible because we believe her infallible. Seeing then we cannot believe it on her own authority, if we believe it at all, it must be upon the authority of scripture. Fourthly, Before we can rely upon the church of Rome's authority to define to us the articles of our faith, we must believe the church of Rome to be this infallible church: but seeing this is no self-evident principle, we must have some other evidence besides herself to induce us to believe it; and what else can that be but scripture? We are told indeed by some of her greatest divines, that there are certain marks and notes of a true church, peculiar to the church of Rome, by which we are obliged to believe her the true church; such as antiquity, universality, holiness of doctrine, &c. But seeing no doctrine can be holy that is not true, we must be satisfied that that church is true before we can know that it is holy; so that before we can reasonably submit to her authority, we must be very well assured that her doctrine is true, and this we cannot be assured of by her authority, because that, as yet, is the matter in question; and therefore we can be no otherwise assured of it, but only by the authority of scripture; and when we are assured beforehand by the authority of scripture that her doctrines are true, her authority comes too late to assure us. Seeing therefore it is evident that there are some, if not all the articles of the Roman faith, that must be known and believed by us upon the authority of scripture, before we can safely rely upon her authority to define them to us, how can we be obliged to settle our faith upon her authority, when as before we can reasonably admit her au-

thority, we must believe several of the articles of our faith upon the authority of scripture? For I would fain know, are these articles of faith, or no: That there is a church; that this church hath authority to define the articles of our faith, and that in so defining, this church is infallible, and that this infallible church is the church of Rome? If they be, as they themselves own they are, then there are some articles it seems that must be believed without the church's authority, upon the single authority of scripture; and if some, why not all? Why should not the scripture be as sufficient to authorize us to believe the rest as these, since its authority is as great in one text as in another? Especially considering,

2. That these things which we must believe from scripture, before we can rely upon the authority of the church of Rome, are at least as obscurely revealed in scripture, as any other article of our Christian faith. The great reason urged by the Romanists against our reliance upon the scripture for our faith, is the obscurity of it; and if this be a good reason, it proves a great deal more than they would have it, viz. that we ought not to rely upon scripture even for those articles, without believing of which we can have no sufficient ground to rely upon the authority of their church. For I would fain know, is it clear and plain from scripture that the present catholic church of every age hath authority to define the articles of faith, and that in all its definitions it is infallible? and that the present church of Rome is this catholic church? If so, how come those texts, upon which those articles are founded, to be understood in a quite different sense, not only by us, but by the greatest part of the primitive fathers, as hath been

abundantly proved by protestant writers? Supposing that we should be so blinded by our partiality to our own tenets, as to misapprehend plain and clear expressions of scripture, it is very strange methinks that the fathers, who were never engaged in the controversy, and so could not be biassed either one way or the other, should yet misapprehend them too. What is this but to say, that let men be never so indifferent, yet they may be easily mistaken in the sense of very plain and clear expressions; and if so, what signifies either speaking or writing? But to proceed to some instances; will any modest man in the world affirm, that the church of Rome's infallibility in defining articles of faith to all succeeding generations is more plainly expressed in those words of our Saviour, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church*, than the divinity of our Saviour is in the beginning of the first chapter of St. John's gospel, where it is expressly affirmed that he is God; whereas in the other there is not the least mention either of the church of Rome, or of infallibility, or defining articles of faith? Why may we not then as well depend upon the one text for the article of our Saviour's divinity, as upon the other for that of the church of Rome's infallibility? Again, are there not innumerable texts of scripture wherein the articles of remission of sin, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the world to come, are at least as plainly expressed as the present church of Rome's infallibility is in any of those texts that are urged in the defence of it? And therefore, if we believe the latter upon the authority of scripture, notwithstanding the pretended obscurity of it, why may we not as well upon the same authority believe all the former, since

the former are at least as plainly expressed as the latter? Either therefore the scripture is plain enough to be relied upon, as to this article of the church of Rome's infallibility, or it is not; if it be not, we have no ground for our dependance upon the authority of her definitions and proposals; if it be, it is plain enough to be relied upon in all other necessary articles of faith, since these are all as plainly at least expressed in scripture as that. For if we may not rely upon scripture because it is not plain, then where it is equally plain it is equally to be relied on.

3. That when we come to rely upon this church's authority, we are exposed to far greater uncertainties than while we relied upon the authority of scripture. For in the first place, we are of all sides agreed that the scripture is infallible, and that such and such writings are parts of scripture; and therefore are absolutely secure, that if we follow the true sense of it, it cannot mislead us. But the much greater part of Christians deny that the church of Rome is infallible; even the church of Rome itself owns the authority we rely on to be infallible, but all Christians all the world over, besides those of her own communion, disallow hers to be so; and to forsake our dependance upon an infallibility which all own, to rely upon an infallibility which but few in comparison admit, is certainly a very dangerous venture. And then, 2dly, as for the infallibility of scripture, we are certain where to find it, viz. in every text, and in every proposition therein contained, which being all the word of God, must be all infallible. But as for the infallibility of the Roman church, as they have handled the matter, it is almost as difficult to find as to prove it; some cry, Lo it is here; and some, Lo it is

there; some place it in the pope only, others in the pope and his college of cardinals; some in the pope presiding in a general council, others in a general council, whether the pope preside in it or no. So that in this church, it seems, there is infallibility somewhere, but what are we the better for it, if we know not where to find it? If we go to the pope for it, there have been two or three popes at once, that have decreed against one another; and therefore one or the other of them to be sure were mistaken. How then shall we know which is the true infallible one? And when I have found the true pope, others tell me I am not yet arrived at the seat of infallibility, until I have found him in his college of cardinals; and when I have found him here, I am still to seek, seeing I find the same pope (Eugenius the Fourth for instance) decreeing one thing in his college of cardinals, and the quite contrary in a general council; and therefore I am sure he could not be infallible in both. Therefore others send me to the pope in a general council; but when I come thither, I find myself at a loss again; because I meet with several instances of one pope's defining one thing in one general council, and another pope the quite contrary in another: and therefore in one or the other council I am sure the one or the other pope was mistaken. And as for general councils themselves, there are sundry of them which are owned by some, and rejected by others of the principal doctors of the Roman communion. And even when councils are legally assembled, there are so many nice disputes among them, what it is that makes them general, and when it is that they act *conciliariter* as they call it, that is, so as to render their decrees perpetually and universally

obliging; that though we were resolved to build our faith upon the authority of this church, yet if we will use that caution in believing, that we ought to do in a matter of so great moment, we should find ourselves involved in greater uncertainties concerning these things, than we are concerning the sense even of the most difficult places of scripture. But then, 3dly, When we are passed over all these difficulties, we are still at as great a loss to understand what is the sense of the church to be believed by us, as what is the sense of scripture. For the church hath no other way to deliver her sense to us, but either by oral tradition, that is, by word of mouth, or by writing: if she deliver her sense to me by oral tradition, how can I know what that is who never heard her speak either in its diffused body, or in a general council, or in any other representative; unless it be that of my own parish-priest perhaps, who, for all I know, may be ignorant or heretical, and so either not understand himself the church's oral tradition, or wilfully pervert it to a contrary meaning? And if the church deliver her sense to me by writing, as she hath done in the written decrees of her general councils, must I read over all her decrees? How should I do that, who understand not so much as the languages in which they are written? Or suppose they were translated, how shall I know that they are faithfully rendered, any more than I do that the scripture is so? But suppose I were certain of this, and should thereupon proceed to read them, alas! I find in them a great many difficult and dubious expressions, yea, and at least seeming contradictions to each other; how then can I be more certain of the true sense of these writings, than of the sense of the writings of

scripture? But you will say, the church hath digested her sense of all her articles of faith into a plain creed and catechism, viz. that of the council of Trent; whereby the plainest reader may, without any laborious inquiries, be readily instructed what he ought to believe. This I confess is something; but as for those articles of faith wherein we and the church of Rome are agreed, we find them as plainly expressed in scripture as in that creed and catechism; and therefore we have reason to believe, that if those articles wherein we disagree had ever been intended for articles of faith, they would have been as plainly expressed there as these; but it is no wonder we should not find them plainly expressed there, when we cannot find them expressed there at all. But do we not find that the scriptures, even in the plainest expressions of articles of faith, have yet been perverted by heretics into a contrary meaning? And what then? Are not the words of councils as liable to be perverted into a contrary meaning as the words of scripture? For do not the Roman doctors differ as much about the sense of their councils, as we do about the sense of our scriptures? yea, and have we not a notorious instance of it at this very day? For what can be more contrary than Bellarmine's exposition of the Trent faith, and the bishop of Condom's? and yet both allowed by the pope, who, by the authority of that council, is made sole arbitrator of the sense of it. But then, 4thly and lastly, As to the sense of scripture, our reliance on the authority of that church leaves us at as great an uncertainty as it found us. For where the scripture designs to speak plainly, as it doth in all things necessary to salvation, the church cannot speak plainer; and therefore there

we may understand the scripture as well without the church as with it; but where it doth not speak plainly, the church of Rome hath left us no infallible commentary whereby to understand it; so that where the scripture is plain, she hath not made it plainer; and where it is obscure, she hath left it as obscure as ever: so that after all the noise that is made of infallibility, her doctors are fain to apply themselves to the same methods of understanding scripture, that is, to consult the sense of antiquity, and compare text with text, and the like that we fallible protestants do; and when they have done all, are as liable to be mistaken as we. Nay, they themselves confess, that even general councils themselves may be mistaken in their applications of scripture; that is, that they may misapply them to wrong purposes, which they cannot do without mistaking the sense of them, of which there are a great many notorious instances in the second council of Nice; which to prove it the duty of Christians to worship images, urges God's taking clay, and making man after his own image; and likewise that of Esay, *There shall be a sign and testimony to the Lord in the land of Egypt;* and also those passages of David, *Confession and beauty is before him. Lord, I have loved the beauty of thy house. O Lord, my face hath sought for thee. O Lord, I will seek after thy countenance. O Lord, the light of thy countenance is sealed over us.* And from that passage, *As we have seen, so have we heard,* they argue that there must be images to look on; and because it is said, *God is marvellous in his saints,* they conclude that the church must be decked with pictures; and from, *No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a*

bushel, they wisely infer that images must be set upon the altar: all which are as remote from their sense, as the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis. What greater certainty have they with their infallibility, than we without it? We can know as well the sense of plain texts of scripture, as of plain texts of councils, or creeds, or catechisms; and we can as easily pervert the sense of the one as of the other: and as for those that are not plain, even general councils, you see, for all their infallibility, may be mistaken about them as well as we. So that when all comes to all, by forsaking the infallible authority of scripture, to rely upon the infallible authority of that church, we are so far from arriving at a greater certainty of faith, that we are involved in greater uncertainties than ever. But then,

4. And lastly, In relying upon the authority of scripture, we are left to no other uncertainties than just what are necessary to render our faith virtuous and rewardable; whereas by relying upon the authority of the church of Rome, (supposing it were as sure a ground of faith as it is pretended,) our faith would have little or nothing of virtue in it. It is pretended, (though falsely you see,) that that church's authority is so sure a ground of faith, that while a man depends upon it he cannot be mistaken in any necessary article of faith; which in reality amounts to no more than this, That while a man believes as that church believes, which infallibly believes all that is necessary to salvation, he infallibly believes all that is necessary to salvation; and it is equally true, that while a man believes as the scripture teaches, which infallibly teaches all that is necessary to salvation, he infallibly believes all that is necessary to salvation;

that is, both are equally false. For no man can infallibly believe either the church or scripture, because infallibility exceeds the capacity of human nature; no man can so believe either but that he may be mistaken, and if he may be mistaken, it is possible he may not believe all that is necessary to salvation, whether he grounds his faith upon the church or the scripture. But because this church pretends so to secure my faith while I depend upon her authority, as that I cannot be mistaken, for this very reason I cannot depend upon it, because I am sure of this, that God never designed for me any such means of believing, as should render my faith infallible. For to what end should he require me to take so much pains and care to secure my faith from errors, if he hath furnished me with any certain means of being infallible? It would be but applying that means, whatever it is, and my danger would be immediately over; and then I need trouble my head no further, being now so secured, as that I cannot be mistaken: after which it would be very impertinent, methinks, for God to trouble me with those unnecessary injunctions of *trying all things*, and *holding fast to that which is good*; of *searching the scriptures*, and *trying the spirits whether they be of God*; and *taking heed whilst I stand, lest I fall.* What need a man be at the expense of all this labour and caution, whose faith is already secured? Seeing therefore God requires these things at our hands, it is a plain case that he never intended us any method how to be infallible in believing; and therefore, since the church of Rome's authority is pretended to be such a method, for that reason it ought to be rejected. It is plain that God intended that our faith should be a grace

and a virtue, and consequently that it should be an act of our wills as well as of our understandings, which supposes the evidence of it to be irresistible; for what virtue is it to believe that the sun shines when it glares full in our eyes? Since therefore our faith must be a free and voluntary assent upon such motives as are sufficient to satisfy an honest mind, but not to compel either an obstinate infidel or self-deceived hypocrite; God did not think fit so to secure our faith, as to leave it impossible for us to err damnably; and indeed if he had, it would have been no virtue in us to believe savingly; for what virtue is it for a man to do that which it is impossible for him not to do? It is sufficient, that we cannot err damnably in our faith without some damnable fault in our wills; but if we either refuse to inquire into this revelation for what is necessary for us to believe, or will only inquire into it with a mind that is biassed with wicked and sinful prejudices, or will not submit our understandings to it upon the clearest conviction, there is no doubt but we may be ignorant; and we may be deceived in things of the greatest moment, and it is but just and fit that we should: and if, notwithstanding these faults, we could not err, for God's sake what virtue would it be to be orthodox? But if with honest, humble, and teachable minds we will diligently inquire into divine revelation, we shall there find all the necessaries to salvation so clearly and plainly proposed to us, that it will be morally impossible for us either to be ignorant of or deceived about them. So that by relying on scripture, you see, we are exposed to no other uncertainties than just what are necessary to render our faith a virtue; and God doth as much require that our faith should

be virtuous, as that it should be orthodox; that it should be the act of an honest, humble, diligent, and teachable mind, as that it should be extended to all things necessary to salvation. Now our faith may be orthodox without an infallible certainty, but it cannot be virtuous and rewardable with it. To what purpose then do the Romanists talk of an infallible certainty in believing? Is it reasonable to expect more certainty than God ever intended to give? He hath given as much as is necessary for honest minds, and no more; and whether knaves and hypocrites believe right or wrong, is of no great concernment. If therefore our faith be liable to no other uncertainty than just what is necessary to try our honesty, that is much better for us, in respect of the virtue of our faith, than an infallible certainty. Supposing therefore that the church of Rome were as infallible as it pretends, it is certain that the scripture is as infallible as that; but whether we rely upon one or the other, we are fallible still. And could that church render us as infallibly certain as it pretends, it would thereby preserve indeed the orthodoxy of our faith, but then at the same time it would destroy the virtue of it: for to believe right when we cannot believe wrong, is fatal and necessary; but to believe right, when through our own default we may believe wrong, this is virtuous and rewardable.

By what hath been said, therefore, I think it is sufficiently evident, that it is upon the scripture we are to rely, and not upon the church, especially upon the Roman church, for all things necessary to salvation; and therefore, since we are obliged to believe these things, upon pain of eternal damnation, it necessarily follows that they must be plain, and clear,

and scripture, otherwise we could not be justly so obliged to believe them. And thus I have shewn at large that the scripture is the great rule of our faith and manners, and that as such it is both full and clear, as containing in it all things necessary to salvation, and proposing them so plainly and clearly, as that upon an honest and diligent inquiry all men may find and discover them.

DISCOURSE XXVI

UPON

JOHN V. 39.

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life.

WHETHER these words are to be rendered indicatively, *Ye do search the scriptures*, as some would have them, or imperatively, *Search the scriptures*, as our translation renders them, amounts to the same thing; for if we render them indicatively, *Ye do search the scriptures*, it is evident that they are spoken with approbation, *Ye do read the scriptures, and ye do very well in so doing:* for thus we find the Bereans commended for *searching the scriptures;* and Timothy, for *knowing them from a child.* And if to search the scripture be a commendable practice, then to be sure our Saviour here mentions it at least with approbation; and what he approves when done, that to be sure he would have us do. Whether therefore it be delivered in the form of a command, or of a bare assertion, it is equivalent to a command, it being at least an assertion of a thing which he approves, and consequently would have all men to practise. But because there is a numerous party in the Christian world which doth not only forbid the people to search the scriptures, but represents it as a practice of very dangerous consequence, it is hereby become necessary that we should not only assert, but prove their obligation to it, which otherwise would be very needless, there being no-

thing more plain and evident in itself. Now to prove that the people are obliged to search and read the scriptures, I shall, as briefly as I can, argue the point from these following topics:

1. From the obligations which the Jews were under to read and search the scriptures of the Old Testament.

2. From our Saviour's and his apostles' approbation of their practice, in pursuance of this their obligation.

3. From the great design and intention of writing the scriptures.

4. From the direction of these holy writings to the people.

5. From the great concernment of the people in the matters contained in them.

6. From the universal sense of the primitive church in this matter.

1. From the general obligation which the Jews were under to read and search their scriptures. For so God requires them *to keep the words which he commanded them in their hearts:* and *to teach them diligently to their children,* and *to talk of them as they sat in their houses, and as they walked in the way, and when they lay down, and when they rose up:* and *to bind them as a sign upon their hands,* Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8. and elsewhere, *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night;* speaking to the children of Israel in general, Jos. i. 8. and again, *Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to*

give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth, Deut. xi. 18, 21. and *to meditate on God's law day and night* David makes a part of the character of the blessed man, Psalm i. 2. Now if they could not keep God's laws in their hearts, as most certainly they could not; if they could not teach them to their children; if they could not talk of them upon all just and proper occasions; and, in a word, if they could not meditate on them day and night without being very well acquainted with them by diligent search and reading them, it is most certain that to read and search into them was their indispensable duty. Now if there be the same reason why we should read the scriptures as there was why the Jews should, then the obligation of these commands must extend to us as well as to them; because the reason of the law is the law: but it is evident, even beyond contradiction, that there is no good reason assignable for the one, which is not of equal force for the other; and whatsoever is objected by our adversaries in this point against our reading the scriptures, is of equal validity against the Jews reading them. It is objected, that our reading them, through our incapacity to understand them, must occasion a great many errors and heresies in the church. And why should not their reading them occasion the same, since neither their understandings were larger than ours, nor their scriptures clearer and more intelligible than ours? It is further objected, that because of the many ill examples recorded in scripture it is dangerous for the people to read it, because of their aptness to be misled and corrupted by example. But I beseech you, are there not more bad examples in the Old Testament than in the New? And were

not the Jews as apt to be corrupted by them as we Christians? And therefore, since these objections do press as much against their reading the scriptures as ours, it is certain they ought to keep both from it or neither. Seeing therefore, notwithstanding these objections, God obliged the Jews to read them, it is plain they are not of force enough to disoblige us from doing the same.

2. From our Saviour and his apostles' approbation of this practice of the Jews, in pursuance of their obligation to it, it is also evident that we are obliged to the same. That the common people of the Jews did ordinarily read the scriptures in our Saviour's time is evident, not only from the text, *Search the scriptures*, (which if you take them indicatively, are an express declaration that they did read them; and if you take them imperatively, necessarily imply that they themselves owned that they ought to read them,) but also from those questions which our Saviour frequently asked them in his conferences with them; such as, *Have ye not read? Have ye never read in the scripture?* and, *Hath not the scripture said so and so?* Which question would be very impertinent, if reading the scripture were not then ordinarily practised by that people. And that even their holy women were then so well instructed in the scriptures as to be able to instruct their children, Timothy is a signal instance, who, though his father were an heathen, had *known the holy scriptures from a child*, 2 Tim. iii. 15. which knowledge he must necessarily have derived from his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, whose faith St. Paul celebrates, 2 Tim. i. 5. And this practice of reading the scriptures, which was so common among that

people in our Saviour's time, is so far from being discontinued, either by himself or his apostles, that it is always mentioned by them with applause and approbation. Thus the Bereans are commended as a people of a nobler strain than those of Thessalonica, because they *searched the scriptures daily* whether those things which St. Paul had preached to them were so or no. And St. Paul is so far from reprehending Timothy for meddling with the scriptures whilst he was a layman, that he mentions it to his honour, *that he had known the scriptures from a child.* And in all those passages wherein our Saviour takes it for granted that the common people of the Jews did read the scripture, we have not the least intimation of his dislike of their practice, which we should certainly have had, had he apprehended it to be either dangerous or unwarrantable. Seeing therefore neither our Saviour nor his apostles do in the least disallow of the scriptures being read by the common people, but on the contrary do expressly commend it; this is a plain argument that it was their intention to perpetuate the practice of it to future ages. For seeing the Jews read the scriptures in obedience to an express command of God, as was shewn before, had our Saviour intended that they should not continue it, he would doubtless have repealed that command by some countermand, which he was so far from doing, that he not only every where allows of their reading the scriptures, but also expressly approves and commends it; whereby he plainly establishes the obligation of that ancient command, in obedience to which they did read them.

3. From the great design and intention of writing the scriptures, it is also evident that the people are

still obliged to read them. It is plain, the great design of writing the scripture was to instruct men in the knowledge, and persuade them to the practice of true religion; for thus, of the scriptures of the Old Testament, St. Paul tells us, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*, Rom. xv. 4. and *for our admonition*, 1 Cor. x. 11. And as for the New Testament, we are told, that it was *written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through his name*, John xx. 31. And St. Peter tells us, that he wrote both his Epistles to *stir up the pure minds of Christians by way of remembrance: and to put them in mind of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour*, 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2. And St. John gives us this account of his writing his Epistles, *These things have I written to you, that ye sin not*, 1 John ii. 1. And St. Jude, this of his, *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*, ver. 3. These are the ends for which the scripture was written; but how can the writing of it contribute to these ends, if we are not permitted to read what is written? For the scripture was written to the people as well as to the clergy, as I shall shew by and by; but to what purpose should it be written to the people to instruct and admonish them, if the people are not allowed to read its instructions and admonitions? What influence could the writing it have upon the people's belief, that *Jesus Christ is*

the Son of God, if they had been debarred from acquainting themselves with what is written concerning him? How could it stir up their remembrance, if they might not read what it suggested to their memory? By what other way can it keep the people from sinning, but by motives and persuasions? But how should its motives and persuasions affect their minds, if they are not allowed to consult and understand them? Upon what account can it move the people earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, if they are not allowed to learn from it either what that faith is, or what those reasons are which oblige them to contend for it? So that to write to the people on purpose to instruct and reform them, and at the same time to purpose to debar them from reading it, is either to suppose that the writing will operate like a charm, or to purpose a downright contradiction. For how oddly would it have looked, if in the aforecited passages the apostles had expressed themselves thus: "These "things are written for your learning and admoni-"tion; but it is by no means fit you should learn "from them what they teach and admonish you. "These things are written that ye should believe "that Jesus is the Christ, and the Son of God; but "they are not written that you should inquire of "them whether Jesus be the Christ or the Son of "God. These things are written to put you in mind "of what hath been spoken by the prophets and "apostles; but they were not written that you might "acquaint yourselves by them what the prophets and "apostles spake. These things are written that you "should not sin; but beware you do not read them, "lest the bad examples recorded in them occasion

"you to sin. In short, these things were written "to excite you *earnestly to contend for the faith* "*once delivered to the saints;* but you are by no "means allowed to inquire into them, lest you should "misunderstand them, and so, instead of contending "for the faith, you should contend for heresy and "false doctrine." Had the apostles thus expressed themselves, I appeal to any reasonable man, whether these passages would not have startled his understanding, and tempted him to question whether the authors of them were well in their wits; and yet this must have been their meaning, supposing that they meant that the people should not read what they wrote.

4. From the direction of these holy writings to the people, it is also evident that the people are still obliged to read, or acquaint themselves with them. For so we find the law of Moses was delivered by God to all the people, as well as to him and Aaron, and, as was shewn before, they were all of them commanded to search and inquire into it. And so also were the sermons of the prophets, which are usually prefaced with an, *Hear, O Israel; Hear, O house of Judah; Hear, O house of Jacob;* and *Hear, all ye of Judah.* So also our blessed Saviour preached his sermons and parables, not only to his apostles and seventy disciples, but also to the people and to the multitudes. And so also his apostles direct their epistles, not only *to the saints, to the faithful in Christ Jesus, to the beloved,* which in the language of scripture includes every Christian, but also *to all that are at Rome, to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, to all the saints which are in Achaia, to all the*

saints which are at Philippi, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Galatia, &c. and *to them which have obtained like precious faith with us;* that is, to all the Jewish Christians dispersed over the world. Seeing therefore the scriptures were directed to all, as well laity as clergy, this not only gives a right to all to read them, but also lays an obligation upon all to acquaint themselves with them. For the very directing such a writing or epistle to such or such persons, doth, in the sense of all the world, imply, that he who writes doth design and intend, that they to whom he directs it should read and peruse it; and therefore since the scriptures were written to all, that is a plain intimation that it was the intention of the writers that all should read them. And for us not to read what God hath written and directed to us, is by implication of fact a profane neglect and contempt of his mercy, and looks as if we either thought him such an insignificant being, or ourselves so little concerned in any thing that he can say or write to us, as that it would not be worth our while to receive and peruse the contents of those sacred epistles, which, by the hands of his holy penmen, he hath vouchsafed to direct to us. Nor is it a sufficient excuse for our contempt to say, that in consideration of our own proneness to err and mistake, we ought to content ourselves with this, that our spiritual guides should read God's writings for us, and deliver the sense and contents of them to us: for to be sure, had God intended that the priests only should read them, he would have directed them only to the priests, and ordered them only to deliver the sense of them to

the people; and therefore since he hath directed them to both, this necessarily implies that it was his intention that both should read them. For if God had not directed them to men, neither priests nor people were obliged to read them; and therefore seeing the great reason why any men ought to read them is, because they are directed to men; this reason obliges all men to read them, because they are directed to all men. For not to be highly concerned to know and understand what it is that God writes to us, is an argument that we have a very mean regard both of his majesty, and his mind, and will. But to be sure whosoever is highly concerned to know what such a writing contains, will, if he can, be very curious to peruse it with his own eyes at least, supposing that it is not unlawful for him so to do; because there is nothing gives that satisfaction to a man's mind, as the information of his own sense. So that for men wilfully to neglect reading the scripture which God hath so expressly directed to them, and thereby not only licensed but obliged them to read it, argues a very profane disregard both of the Author of it and of the matter it contains; and for any man, or society of men, to forbid the people to read what God hath written and directed to them, is not only to deprive them of a right which God hath given them, but also to acquit them of a duty which he hath laid upon them. For St. Paul, in those epistles which he wrote to the Christian people in general of such and such churches, still takes it for granted that they would read them, as being not only warranted, but obliged thereunto by his writing them; for so, Ephes. iii. 3, 4. speaking of that great mystery of the calling the Gentiles which God

had revealed to him, concerning which, saith he, *I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.* So also, 2 Cor. i. 13. *We write no other things unto you, than what you read;* that is, than what you may at least, and are obliged to read by virtue of our writing them to you. And as for his Epistle to the Thessalonians, which he wrote to that whole church, he gives charge that it should *be read to all the holy brethren,* 1 Thess. v. 27. So also for that of the Colossians, iv. 16. *When this epistle is,* or hath been, *read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.* Where you see he all along either supposes or requires that what he wrote to all should be read by all and to all. If therefore this authority of St. Paul be sufficient to overrule the authority of any pretended successor of St. Peter, then it is certain that reading the scripture is still the duty of laymen, notwithstanding any papal prohibition to the contrary.

5. From the great concernment the people have in the matters contained in scripture, it is also evident, that they are obliged, if they are able, to read it, and acquaint themselves with it: for as for the matters which the scriptures contain, they are such as are of everlasting moment to the people as well as to the clergy. The articles of faith which the scripture proposes are as necessary to be believed by the people as by the clergy. The precepts of life which the scripture prescribes are as necessary to be practised by the people as by the clergy. The promises and threats with which the scripture enforces those precepts are as necessary to be consi-

dered by the people as by the clergy: and seeing both are equally concerned in the great matters which the scriptures contain, what reason can be assigned why both should not be obliged to acquaint themselves with them? I know it is pretended, that it is the proper office of the clergy to study the scriptures for the people as well as for themselves, and that therefore the people are obliged to receive the sense of the scriptures upon trust from their teachers, without making any further inquiry. But I beseech you, are you sure that your teachers are infallible? that they are not so is most certain, it being notorious that most of the prevailing heresies of Christendom were first set on broach by the teachers of the church, and it is impossible they should be infallible who have so often actually erred even in matters of the highest moment. Suppose then, what is fairly supposable, that your teachers should mislead you, and not only into dangerous, but damnable errors; are you sure that they shall be damned for you, and that you shall escape? If so, then heresy in the laity can never be damnable, if they receive it upon trust from their teachers; and consequently their souls are as safe under the conduct of false teachers as true, provided always that, right or wrong, they believe what is taught them. But if yourselves must give an account to God as well for your faith as for your manners, and are liable in your own persons to eternal damnation, as most certainly you are, as well for heresy as immorality; then it is the most unreasonable thing in the world, that you should in all things be obliged to believe your teachers upon trust; for at this rate a man may be eternally damned, merely for believing

what he is obliged to believe. If it be said that the people are not bound to believe what their particular pastor teaches, but what the church teaches them, and the church cannot err, though their particular pastor may; I would fain know, how shall the people be otherwise informed what the church teaches them than by the expositions of their particular pastors, they being at least as incapable of informing themselves what the doctrine of the church is, as what the doctrine of the scripture is; and therefore, if their pastor should err damnably in expounding to them what the church teaches, as it is supposable he may, if he be not infallible, there is no remedy but they must err damnably in believing whatsoever their pastor teaches. But we are further told, that it is sufficient for the people that they believe in the gross that whatsoever the church teaches is true; and that as for the particulars, there is no necessity that they should be informed about them; because he who believes that all that the church teaches is true, implicitly believes all that is necessary, seeing the church teaches all that is necessary. But the mischief of it is, that this compendious way of belief is utterly insignificant, and doth no way comport with the design and intention of a Christian's faith. For God doth not require our faith merely for its own sake, but in order to a further end, that it may purify our hearts, and influence our lives and manners; that is, that the matters which we believe might, by being believed by us, affect our wills, and continually move and persuade us to abstain from *all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;* and if our faith hath not this effect upon us, St.

James assures us that it is a dead faith, and will profit us nothing. But how is it possible that our believing such and such propositions should move and persuade us, if we do not know what those propositions are, and what is the true sense and meaning of them? What man can be persuaded by such proposals as he doth not understand, and of which he hath no manner of explicit knowledge? An heathen, that believes that whatsoever God teaches is true, doth implicitly believe that Jesus Christ came from God to reveal his will to mankind, because it is certain that God teaches this; but what is he the better for this his implicit belief? What influence can it have upon his heart and manners, who perhaps never heard of Jesus Christ, nor of any one proposition which he revealed to the world? And so he who believes that whatsoever the church teaches is true, doth implicitly believe that there shall be a future judgment, a resurrection of the dead, and an everlasting state of happiness or misery after death, because all these things the church teaches? But if he never hear of them, or hath no explicit knowledge and belief of them, how is it possible they should operate on his will and affections, or ever persuade him to be the better man, or the better Christian? And the same is to be said of all the other articles of Christianity. So that either we must believe to no purpose, and content ourselves with an insignificant faith, that will not at all avail us, or take up our faith upon trust from fallible teachers, who may mislead us into damnable errors; and if they should, we must be liable to answer for it in our own persons, and at our own eternal peril; or, which is the truth of the case, we must be allowed to inquire and judge

for ourselves, at least in all things necessary to our eternal salvation. Seeing therefore there are many things in scripture which the scripture itself obliges me, upon pain of damnation, to believe; it hence necessarily follows, that so far forth as the scripture obliges me to believe what it teaches, it obliges me to understand what it teaches, otherwise I must believe I know not what, which is impossible; and so far as the scripture obliges me to understand what it teaches, it must oblige me to search, inquire, and judge what it teaches; because I cannot understand without inquiring and judging: but how can I inquire what the scripture teaches, if I cannot be admitted to read and consult the scripture? And so again, there are many duties in scripture which the scripture itself obliges me to practise upon pain of eternal damnation; but how can it oblige me to practise what it doth not oblige me to understand? or how can it oblige me to understand what it doth not oblige me to inquire after? But how can I inquire what it is that the scripture obliges me to practise, when I am forbid all access to it, and it is locked up from me in an unknown tongue? In short, therefore, seeing the things contained in scripture are of the highest moment to the people, and it is as much as their souls are worth not to believe and practise what it teaches; and seeing they can neither believe nor practise what they do not understand; it is of infinite concern to them so far at least to read, consult, and understand the scripture, as they stand obliged to believe and practise its doctrines and precepts.

6. And lastly, From the universal sense of the primitive church in this matter, it is also evident, that

the people are obliged to read or acquaint themselves with the holy scripture. For the primitive church, for above six hundred years, were so far from debarring the people the use of the scripture, that it continually urged and pressed it upon them as a matter of indispensable obligation. For so Origen wishes, that "all would do as it is written," viz. *search the scriptures*. So also Clemens Alexandrinus, "Hearken ye that are afar off, hearken ye that be "near; the word of God is hid from no man: it is "a light common to all men, and there is no dark-"ness in it." So also St. Austin[e], "Think it not "sufficient that ye hear the scriptures in the church, "but do you also read the scriptures yourselves in "your own houses, or get some other to read them "to you." So also St. Jerome[f], "The Lord hath "spoken to us by his gospel, not that a few, but all "should understand." And elsewhere, speaking of the women that were at Bethlehem with Paula, "It "was not lawful," saith he, "for any one of all the "sisters to be ignorant of the Psalms, nor to pass "over any day without learning some part of the "scriptures." And elsewhere[g], "We are taught," saith he, "that the lay-people ought to have the "word of God, not only sufficiently, but also with "abundance, that so they may be able to teach and "counsel others." So also St. Chrysostom[h], "Hear "me, O laity, get ye the Bible, the most wholesome "remedy for the soul; and if ye will no more, at "least get the New Testament, St. Paul's Epistles, "and the Acts, that they may be your continual and

[e] In Orat. adhort. ad Gent.
[f] In Psalm lxxxvi.
[g] Ep. ad Coloss. c. 3.
[h] Ep. ad Coloss. Hom. 9.

"earnest teachers." And elsewhere he affirms[i], "That it is more necessary for the lay-people to read "the scriptures, than either for the monks or priests, "or any others." And to cite no more of the infinite authorities of the fathers to this purpose, St. Basil observes[k], "The scripture of God is like an apo-"thecary's shop, full of medicines of sundry sorts, "that so every man may there choose a convenient "remedy for his disease." And that the people as well as the priests were then allowed the use of the Bible, is evident from a notorious matter of fact; for when the Roman emperors endeavoured to force the Christians by persecution and torments to deliver up their Bibles to be burnt, that so by extinguishing those sacred records, they might extinguish Christianity, they examined not only the bishops and clergy, but also the people of all degrees and both sexes; many of whom, as well women as men, owned that they had Bibles, but rather chose to die than to deliver them up; and many others who, to avoid death, delivered up their Bibles, and are therefore branded with the ignominious name of *traditors*, for which they were excluded the communion of the church, and could not be readmitted without a long and severe penance. But it is impossible the people could have been *traditors*, if they had had no Bibles to deliver up; and therefore being so, is an undeniable argument that the people were then allowed the use of the scripture, as well as the priests. And by the way, it is very strange that any community of Christians should think that a proper way to extinguish heresy, which those heathen persecutors made use of to ex-

[i] In Matt. Hom. 3. [k] In Psalm i.

tinguish Christianity. But that in those first ages the people were allowed the use of the Bible, is a case so plain, that they, who of latter ages have thought meet to repeal this allowance, have never been able to produce so much as one probable colour of primitive authority to warrant their practice. And though in other points they not only claim but ravish antiquity, in despite of modesty as well as truth; yet here they are so abandoned of all pretence to it, that they are not able to produce so much as one passage of any primitive father, that seems to discourage the people from reading the scripture, and much less that forbids them so to do. And it is notorious to all the world, that in the primitive ages, when the Latin was the vulgar language of the Romans, the Bible was translated into that language for the use and instruction of the people; but when through the many incursions of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire this language was worn out by degrees, and, instead of being the vulgar, became an unknown tongue to that people; the governors of that church, having to serve their own secular ends, introduced into it sundry corrupt doctrines and practices, which they feared the light of the scripture might detect to the people, they thought it most advisable not to translate it into the new vulgar, but to let it remain locked up from their cognizance in the old Latin, which by this time very few, except the clergy, understood. And when for some time it had lain hid from them in an unknown tongue, they proceeded at last wholly to forbid the use of it to the laity. So that about the ninth and tenth ages, which all agree were overcast with gross darkness and ignorance, the scriptures were shut up, like the sybil-

line oracles in the Capitol, and none but the priests were allowed to read and consult them. And though upon the commencement of the reformation, the Bible was for some time set forth again in sundry vulgar languages among the people, yet did the guides of that church soon find it necessary, for defence of their own unscriptural doctrines and practices, to remit it to its old confinement. For,

First, The council of Trent, in the fourth rule of their Index Expurgatorius, forbids the laity to read, or so much as to have the Bible in the vulgar language, though translated by those of their own church, without a license in writing from the bishop of the diocese, or the inquisitor; and this upon pain of not receiving absolution of their sins, unless they delivered up those their Bibles to their ordinary. To which rule, pope Clement the Eighth afterwards added this observation, "That hitherto by the command and "practice of the holy Roman and universal inquisi-"tion, the faculty of granting such licenses for read-"ing or keeping Bibles in the vulgar tongue, or any "summaries or historical compendiums of the said "Bibles, is taken away; which is to be inviolably "observed." And in the Index of Prohibited Books, published by pope Alexander the Seventh, not only those Bibles that are translated and printed by heretics, but also all Bibles in any vulgar tongue are absolutely forbidden. And though, where the reformation hath prevailed, they are forced against their own laws more freely to indulge the use of the scripture to their people, yet in those countries where they are sole masters, this privilege is very rarely granted.

And now being thus necessitated to deprive the people of the light of the scripture, lest they should

thereby discover their errors and corruptions, it was necessary for them to invent some plausible pretences to justify a practice so contrary both to scripture and primitive antiquity, and so enormously derogatory to the common right of Christians; and when it must be done, it is a very hard case, if men of wit and learning cannot find something to say for any thing. Now the two main pretences that are urged in this case, are,

First, That a general permission of the use of scripture to the people must necessarily open a wide door to errors and heresies.

Secondly, That it will prove an unavoidable occasion of great corruptions in manners.

1. That a general permission of the use of scripture to the people must necessarily open a wide door to errors and heresies; because there are many things in scripture which are hard to be understood, and which the unlearned, who are unqualified to understand them aright, will be apt to wrest into a wrong sense, to their own destruction. To which I answer,

1. That this reason holds as good against the writing and publishing the scripture at first in languages that were vulgarly known to the people, as against the translating them now into the vulgar languages. For the Hebrew, in which the Old Testament was written, was the vulgar language of the Jews; and the Greek, in which the New Testament was written, was then the most vulgar language of the Jews and Gentiles; and yet notwithstanding, there were the same hard things then in the scripture as now, and the people were as unlearned then, and as apt to wrest these hard scriptures to their own destruction

then as now; yet God notwithstanding thought fit to write and publish it in languages that were most known to the people; and therefore, either we must say, that he did not take that care which he ought to have done to prevent errors and heresies, or that this is no good reason why the people should be debarred of the scripture in their own vulgar language. For why should not the writing the scriptures at first in the vulgar languages as much open a door to heresy, as the translating them afterwards, seeing it is neither their being written in the vulgar language, nor their being translated into the vulgar language, but their being in the vulgar language that is here pretended to set open this dangerous door to heresies.

2. This objection strikes with equal force against God's writing and publishing the scripture to the people, as against their reading and consulting it. For that God wrote these scriptures to the people, and that in so doing he not only gave them a right, but also laid on them an obligation to read them, I have already shewed. If therefore the reading the scripture by the people be such an unavoidable inlet of error and heresy, as this objection pretends, it was doubtless very unadvisedly done of God to publish such a dangerous book to the world; which those for whom he published, and to whom he directed it, cannot familiarly converse with without imminent peril of being infected with heresy. And if the scripture be such a quarrelsome knife as these men say it is, that the people can hardly touch it without cutting their fingers, they are certainly more beholding to the church for taking it from them, than they are to God for bestowing it on them.

3. This objection makes as much at least against

the priests reading the scripture, as the people. For most of those heresies that have been broached to the people, were first brewed by the priests, from whose lips the people do commonly derive their errors, as well as their knowledge: witness those famous heresies with which the Christian world hath been so distracted from one generation to another, such as the Novatian, the Donatist, the Arian, the Pelagian, the Eutychian, the Eunomian; all which counterfeits, and a great many more, were first coined by the clergy, and dispersed for current Christianity among the laity. And therefore, if this pretence, that the reading of scripture opens a gap to heresy, be a sufficient reason why the laity should not read it, it is a much more sufficient reason why the clergy should not read it. For it requires skill and learning as well to wrest the scripture into such false senses as are likely to impose upon the world, as to interpret it into its true sense; and I am very sure that it ordinarily requires more wit and art to extort from the scripture probable errors, than it doth to discover by it necessary truth; and if so, then if the danger of letting in heresies is a true reason why any should not read it, it is much more a true reason why the learned should not read it, than the unlearned; and consequently why the priests should not read it than the people, seeing the former are more qualified to extract heresies from it than the latter. If therefore this objection signify any thing, it must be this, that it is a very dangerous thing for any body to read the Bible; that this same divine book, which God thought fit to publish to the world, and which the primitive church thought fit to oblige all that were able to peruse and study, is now become such a

dangerous inlet of heresy, that, like Pandora's box, you can no sooner open it, but swarms of errors and false doctrines will presently fly abroad into the world; so that it would be very well for the world, if it were either utterly extinguished, or hid in some inaccessible repository, where no mortal eye might ever approach it.

4. This objection expressly contradicts our Saviour and the primitive fathers. For, Matt. xxii. 29. our Saviour tells the Sadducees, who were cavilling with him about the resurrection, *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures*. Had therefore the Sadducees been of the same mind with our objectors, they would doubtless have told him, "By your good leave, sir, "in this point you yourself are in an error; for in "all probability, had we known the scripture, or "been intimately acquainted with it, we should have "erred much more." Either therefore our Saviour was mistaken in charging the error of the Sadducees upon their ignorance of scripture, or our objectors are mistaken in making it so necessary an expedient for the prevention of error to forbid the people being acquainted with scripture; for it is plain, he and they are of quite different opinions in the case. But whatever their opinion is, I am sure the primitive fathers were of the same opinion with our Saviour: for Irenæus, writing of the Valentinian heretics[l], "All "those errors they fall into, because they know not "the scriptures." So St. Jerome[m], "We must search "the scriptures with all diligence, that so, as being "good exchangers, we may know the lawful coin "from the copper:" and elsewhere, "That infinite

[l] Lib. iii. c. 12. [m] In Ep. ad Ephes. l. iii. c. 4.

"evils arise from ignorance of the scriptures, and "that from this cause the greatest part of heresies "have proceeded." St. Chrysostom is of opinion, "That if men would be conversant with the scrip-"tures, and attend to them, they would not only not "fall into errors themselves, but be able to rescue "those that are deceived; and that the scriptures "would instruct men both in right opinions and "good life." And, to name no more, Theophylact tells us, "That nothing can deceive them who search "the holy scriptures; for that," saith he, "is the can-"dle whereby the thief is discovered." But it seems, according to modern experiments, this candle of scripture rather serves to light the thief into the house, than to discover him when he is there; and therefore it is thought necessary, for honest men's security, either that it should be wholly extinguished, or at least hindered from giving light by being shut up in a dark lantern of an unknown tongue. But when they who were once the honest men are become the thieves, it is no wonder that they should thus change their note, and complain of the light of this candle as dangerous to them, which heretofore they esteemed their greatest security. I am sure the reason assigned by St. Peter, why some men wrested the scriptures to their own destruction, was not their reading the scripture, but contrariwise, their not reading it enough; *which they that are unlearned*, saith he, *wrest to their own destruction*, 2 Pet. iii. 16. Unlearned in what? Why doubtless in the holy scripture. For as to human learning, St. Peter himself was as unlearned as they; and if it were their being unlearned in scripture that occasioned them to wrest it into an heretical sense, then it is not men's

reading the scripture that leads them into heresy, but their not reading it enough. To say therefore that the people's reading the scripture is an inlet of heresy, and to say, no, it is not their reading it, but their not reading it enough, is the inlet of heresy, is an express contradiction; the former, our objectors say; the latter, our Saviour, his apostles, and the primitive church say; and I think it is no hard matter to determine which of these two contradictions we ought to believe.

5. And lastly, According to this objection, the best way to keep men from being heretics is to deprive them of all means of arriving at the knowledge of the truth: and this, I confess, is a very certain way, though not a very honest one. Let men know nothing of religion, and to be sure they cannot be heretics, it being impossible for men to err in their conceptions of those things whereof they have no notion. Put out a man's eyes, and you certainly prevent his being imposed upon by false mediums of sight to mistake one colour or figure for another; and yet I fancy most men would think this a cruel kind of courtesy. But if men must not be allowed scripture to instruct them in the truth, for this reason, because it may occasionally mislead them into errors and heresies; then they must be allowed no means of instruction that may occasion them to err, and consequently no means at all, there being no imaginable means of instruction which may not be an occasion of errors and heresies. Is the scripture itself in its own nature an occasion of misleading men into heresy, or not? If you say it is, consider, before you say it, how it could consist with the truth and veracity of God to publish such a book to the world,

as tends in its own nature to seduce and mislead the understandings of those that read it. If you say it is not so in itself, but only that it may be so accidentally, I would fain know what means of instruction is there which may not accidentally become an occasion of misleading men into heresy; and therefore if this be a sufficient reason to deprive men of scripture, it is sufficient to deprive them of all other means of instruction. And seeing the knowledge of religion is the food of men's souls, to keep them in ignorance for fear they should err, is to deny them food for fear they should surfeit. There is no doubt but men whose minds are tinctured with heretical pravity will be apt enough to extract the poison of error out of the clearest conveyances and discoveries of truth; but what then? Do not bad men ordinarily apply the best things to the worst purposes? If men fall into heresy by reading the scripture, where lies the fault? Not in the scripture, sure; no Christian will pretend that; and if it be in themselves, in their pride, or vainglory, or covetousness, or sensuality, (as it is demonstrable it is,) is it just that all should be deprived of it, because some ill men have made an ill use of it? Some men have surfeited by eating and drinking, is it just that all mankind therefore should be deprived of meat and drink? Suppose a prince, pretending to be an infallible geographer, should issue out a proclamation commanding all his subjects to travel at midnight, and should assign this as the reason of it, that he had been certainly informed that several of them had lost their way at noon, and wandered into bogs and precipices by the light of the sun; would any one imagine this to be the true reason, or rather would not every one be-

lieve that his true design was to keep his people in ignorance of the roads and situation of his country, that so they might never be able to discover the errors of his maps, which would perhaps discover him to be not only a fallible geographer, but also a very erroneous one? And where the people are forbid travelling in the light of the scripture, whatever may be pretended, wise men will believe that the true reason is, not to prevent the people's falling into errors, but to prevent the discovering the errors of those to whose guidance and direction they are wholly and solely subjected. And this I conceive is a sufficient answer to the first objection, viz. that the allowance of the scripture to the people is a dangerous inlet of error and heresy. I proceed therefore to the second, which is this:

Obj. 2. That there are many things recorded in scripture which are very apt to suggest lewd thoughts to the people, and thereby to corrupt their manners, as particularly the many bad examples therein related, which are of a very contagious nature, and consequently dangerous for the people to converse with. In answer to which, I desire these four things may be seriously considered.

1. That this objection strikes as much against the scripture itself as against the people's reading it. For what worse thing can be said of the scripture than this, that it is such an infectious book, so apt to excite impure thoughts in men's minds, and to kindle lewd affections in their hearts, that it is by no means fit the people should read it? Should this be said to a Turk or a heathen, who had never read one word in the Bible, he would certainly conclude it to be nothing but a canto of ribaldries, written for

no other end but to provoke and entertain the lascivious inclinations of mankind. And certainly had our objectors but as much reverence for this holy book as they pretend, they would rather oblige the people to read it, than withhold it from them upon a pretence that doth so scandalously reflect upon its reputation. If there be any such passages in scripture as are apt to start lewd thoughts in men's minds, the utmost that can be fairly pretended is, that those passages ought to have been left out of the people's Bibles, or at least to have been left untranslated: but to urge this as a reason why all the rest of the scripture should be denied to the people, insinuates as if the whole were nothing else but a mere kennel of contagious obscenities. For to urge that for a reason why the scripture in general should not be read by or to the people, (which at most is only a reason why some few passages of it should not be read by them,) is to suppose the whole scripture to be made up of such passages as are apt to infuse vicious thoughts into the people; than which what can there be supposed more false in itself, or more derogatory to the scripture?

2. This objection, if it proves any thing, doth as well prove that it was unfit for God to publish the scripture to the people, as it is for the people to read it. For is it fit that he, *who is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, should publish such things to the world as are apt to engender impure thoughts in men's minds? And yet, though men's minds were as apt to imbibe impure thoughts when these things were first published as they are now, this hindered not God from publishing them to the world in such languages as are best known and understood by the

people. Either therefore God did not so well know what is apt to corrupt men's minds as our wise objectors; or he was less concerned than they to preserve them from being corrupted; or what they object is both false and scandalous. For to say, that the wise and holy God hath published such things to the world as his ministers find necessary to conceal from the world, lest its thoughts should be corrupted by them, is in effect to say, that his ministers are grown wiser than he, or are more concerned for the interest of holiness than he. If the vicious examples, for instance, that are recorded in scripture are more apt to deprave men than to instruct them, what need they have been recorded? What is there in the mere story of Noah's drunkenness and incest, and David's adultery, considered abstractly from the good instructions it gives, that should move God to deliver it down to all future posterity? If it serve no good ends, it is recorded to a bad purpose; and therefore, if for this reason, because it is apt to corrupt men's minds, the church be obliged to conceal it now, for the very same reason God was obliged to have concealed it for ever. Either therefore we must say that God did very ill in publishing it, or that the church doth very ill in suppressing it; for God could have no other end in publishing it to the world, but only to instruct the world by it. If therefore it be not instructive, God was mistaken; but if it be, it is fit the world should be acquainted with it.

3. That this objection doth expressly contradict the scripture itself; for whereas it tells us, that the bad examples recorded in scripture would be apt to deprave the people's minds and manners, St. Paul

tells us the quite contrary: *These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they*, i. e. the Israelites in the wilderness, *lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*, 1 Cor. x. 6—11. Whereas this objection urges, that there are sundry passages in scripture which, should the people read, would excite evil thoughts in their minds; the same St. Paul tells us, that *all scripture is profitable*, not only *for doctrine* and *reproof*, but also *for correction, for instruction in righteousness*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. Whereas this objection pretends, that it would be very unsafe for young people especially to be allowed the scripture, because there are several amorous stories and passages in it which will be apt to suggest wanton thoughts to their gay and amorous fancies; David, it is plain, was of a quite contrary mind; for *wherewith*, saith he, *shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*, Psalm cxix. 9. than which two passages what assertions can be more contrary one to another?

4. And lastly, That supposing this objection to be thus far true, that there are some passages in scripture which may sometimes occasionally excite bad thoughts in men's minds, yet this is no just reason

why the use of scripture should be forbid to the people. For every thing which the people occasionally make bad uses of, is for that reason to be forbid to them; even prayer and the sacraments, and the profession of Christianity, ought to be forbidden them as well as the scripture, seeing of the one as well as of the other many people do occasionally make very bad uses. So long as the scripture is good in itself, and apt in its own nature to instruct and edify those that read it, this is sufficient, not only to warrant the people's use of it, but to enjoin and require it; and if it sometimes occasion corrupt thoughts in corrupt minds, this is no more a reason why the people should be deprived of the light of it, than some bad men's making ill use of the light of the sun is why the sun should be extinguished, or why the people should be for ever shut up from the light of it in dark and dismal dungeons. But as for those very passages in scripture, which do sometimes occasion ill thoughts in men's minds, they are so far from doing it of their own natures, that, as they are delivered in scripture, there is nothing more naturally apt to repress bad thoughts, and to arm and fortify men's minds against them. As for instance, the bad examples recorded in scripture are generally delivered with infamous characters, severe prohibitions, and dreadful instances of God's vengeance attending them, which render them much more apt to repress than to excite evil thoughts in men's minds; to quicken them to prayer and watchfulness against temptations, and, when at any time they have been overcome by them, to encourage them to repentance; or when they have overcome them, to stir them up to a grateful acknowledgment of that pre-

venting and assisting grace of God, by which they have been enabled to resist and repel them. These are the natural uses of those bad examples recorded in scripture; and therefore if, instead of making these uses of them, some men pervert them to bad purposes, that is their faults, and not the scripture's. It is sufficient that the bad examples in scripture, as they are there recorded, are in themselves of excellent use to the people; but should men be deprived of the use of every good thing they abuse, I would fain know what one good thing would be left free to their enjoyment. And now having proved at large the people's right and obligation to use and search the holy scripture, and answered the main objections against it, I shall conclude with these two inferences from the whole.

1. If the people are obliged to acquaint themselves with scripture, then they are obliged to receive, upon the authority of scripture, those divine truths which it proposes to their belief. For to what other end should we be obliged to read and consult the word of God, but only that we may learn from it what is his mind and will? But how should we learn from scripture what God's mind is, if we are not to believe what he therein declares upon scripture authority? If I must not believe when I read the scripture that this is God's mind, because the scripture says so, it is impossible I should ever learn God's mind by reading it; and consequently I am obliged to read it to no purpose: for there is nothing can teach me what God's mind is, but that which gives me sufficient ground to believe that what it teaches is the mind of God. When therefore I read the scripture, and find such a proposition plainly asserted

in it, is this a sufficient ground or no for me to believe it to be the mind of God? If it be, then the authority of scripture is a sufficient ground for my belief; if it be not, then the scripture cannot teach me what God's mind is, because it cannot give me sufficient ground to believe any one proposition in it to be the mind of God. We are told indeed, that we are not to receive the sense of the scripture from the scripture, but from the church, who alone hath authority to expound it to us, and whose expositions in all matters of faith are infallible. But if this be so, to what end should we read the scripture, seeing the only end of reading is to learn the sense of what we read, which, according to this principle, is not to be learned from scripture? So that though there be no other wise end of reading the scripture, but only to learn from it what it means, yet it seems for men to read it for this end is a perfect labour in vain; seeing it is not from the scripture, but from the church, that they are to learn the meaning of scripture. For as for the scripture, if these men are to be believed, it is nothing but a heap of unsensed characters; so they expressly term it: but what do they mean by it? Is it that the scripture consists of a company of letters, and syllables, and words, that carry with them no determinate sense, that God Almighty hath written and published a book to the world that means nothing? If so, then when the church by its infallible authority pretends to expound the scripture, her meaning is not to expound the sense of it, but to impose a sense on it which was never in it; for how can she expound the sense of a book which hath no sense in it? If the church is to expound the sense of scripture, the scripture must have a certain

determinate sense in it before she expounds it: for to expound the sense of that which hath no sense, is nonsense: and if the scripture hath a certain sense in it antecedently to the church's exposition of it, why do they call it a parcel of unsensed characters? If their meaning be only this, that the sense of scripture, as it is delivered in scripture, is so obscure and ambiguous, that without the infallible exposition of the church, we can never be certain what it is; besides that this is notoriously false, the scripture in all necessary points both of faith and manners, being so very plain and clear, that any man that reads it with an unprejudiced mind, may be as certain of the sense of it, as he can be of the sense of any writing, and consequently of the sense of any written exposition of the church; besides this, I say, it is evident, that whatever these men pretend, it is not merely because of the obscurity of scripture that they oblige men to ground their faith upon the church, and not upon the scripture. For they own, as well as we, that in many things the scripture is very plain and clear, and yet they will by no means allow men to ground their belief of these things upon the authority of scripture, but all must be resolved into the authority of the church. By which it is evident, that if all the scripture were as plain as the plainest scriptures, they would still contend for the necessity of men's relying upon the church, and not upon the scripture; and consequently that the true reason why they contend for it is, not because the scripture is obscure, but because they are resolved to advance their church's authority. We own, as well as they, that where the scripture is obscure, men ought to be guided by the authority of

the church, which we freely allow to be the best expositor of scripture. But the true state of the difference between them and us is this, that whereas we require plain men to judge of plain things with their own understandings; and all men, so far forth as they are capable, to judge for themselves in matters of religion, and not content themselves to see with the church's eyes, where they are able to see with their own; nothing will satisfy these men, but to have all men, as well wise as simple, surrender up their faith and judgment to the church, and wink hard, and believe whatever the church believes, purely because the church believes it. Whatever they pretend, therefore, the truth of the case is this, they will by no means allow us to believe upon the authority of scripture; not because the scripture is obscure, (though this they pretend, for were it never so plain, the case would be the same,) but because they are sensible that this will inevitably subvert their usurped dominion over the faith and consciences of men. But we must believe upon the authority of the church; and who is this church, I beseech you? Why they themselves are this church. So that whereas God hath published a book called the *Bible*, on purpose to declare his mind and will to the world, here are started up a sort of men that call themselves the *church*, who very gravely tell us, "Sirs, you must not so much as look into this "book, or if you do, must not believe any one word "in it upon its own credit and authority. For "though we do confess it is the word of God, yet "we are the sole judges of the sense of it; and there-"fore whatsoever we declare is its sense, how un-"likely soever it may seem to you, you are bound

" in conscience to receive and believe it for this very " reason, because we declare it. In short, you must " resign up your eyes, your faith, your reason, and " understandings to us, and see only with our eyes, " and believe only with our faith, and judge only " with our judgment; and whithersoever we shall " think fit to lead you, you must tamely follow us, " without presuming to examine whether we lead you " right or wrong." But yet, after all, to induce us thus to enslave our understandings to them, they themselves are fain to appeal to scripture, and allow us in some things to judge of the sense of it, and to believe those things upon its authority. For no wise and honest man will ever believe either that they are the church, or the infallible judges of the sense of scripture, without some proof and evidence; and for this they are fain to produce several texts of scripture, such as, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church.* Now supposing that to be true, which is notoriously false, viz. that those texts do necessarily imply that they are the only true catholic church, and that, as such, they are constituted by God infallible judges of scripture; yet before I can believe so, I must judge for myself whether this be the sense of them or no; and if I judge it is, I must believe that they are the church, and infallible upon the scripture's authority, and not theirs; for their authority is the thing in debate, and I cannot believe upon it before I believe it. So then, though we must believe nothing else upon scripture authority, yet upon this very authority we must believe that they are the church, and that they are infallible, which are the fundamental principles of their religion; that is to say, we must be-

lieve as much upon scripture authority as will serve their turn, and no more. But may I be certain of the truth of these two fundamental principles upon scripture authority, or no? If I may, why may I not as well be infallibly certain upon the same authority of other principles of Christianity as well as those, seeing there are no common principles of Christian religion but what are at least as plainly revealed in scripture as these. But this will spoil all; for if men may be infallibly certain of the principles of religion upon scripture authority, what will become of the necessity of men's relying upon the church, which is founded upon this principle, that men can arrive at no infallible certainty in religion by relying upon the authority of scripture, or indeed any other authority but the church's? But if I cannot be infallibly certain of those two principles, viz. that they are the church, and infallible, by those authorities of scripture which they urge to prove them, how can I be infallibly certain of any thing that they declare and define? For if I am not certain that they are the church, for all I know the church may be infallible, and yet they may be mistaken; and if I am not certain that they are infallible, for all I know they may be the church, and yet still be mistaken. In short, no authority can render me infallibly certain, but that which is infallible; no infallibility can render me infallibly certain, but that of which I have an infallible certainty. Either therefore the scripture can render me infallibly certain of the infallibility of their church, (and if it cannot, I am sure nothing can,) or it cannot; if it can, why may it not as well render me infallibly certain of other principles of Christianity, which are at least as

plainly revealed in it as that? If I cannot, how can I be infallibly certain that any thing she defines and declares to me is true? If then the authority of scripture can give us an infallible certainty, we have as just a pretence to it as they, it being upon this authority that we ground our faith; if it cannot, neither they nor we can justly pretend to it, because they cannot otherwise be infallibly certain of their own infallibility but by scripture. But the truth of it is, God never intended either that they or we should be infallibly certain in the matters of our religion; for after all the means of certainty that he hath given us, he still supposes that we may err, and plainly tells us that there must be heresies, and that even from among the members of the true church, where infallible certainty is, (if it be any where,) there should arise false teachers, who should bring in damnable doctrines; which could never have happened, if he had left any such means to his church as should render her children infallibly certain. All that he designed was, to leave us such sufficient means of certainty in religion, as that we might not err either dangerously or damnably without our own fault. He hath left us his word, and in that hath plainly discovered to us all that is necessary for us to believe in order to eternal life. He hath left us a standing ministry in his church to explain his word to us, and to guide us in the paths of righteousness and truth; but still he requires us to search the one, and attend to the other, with honest, humble, and teachable minds; and if we do not, we may err, not only dangerously, but damnably, and it is but fit and just we should. But if we diligently search the scripture, and faithfully rely upon its

authority, without doing of which we search it in vain; if we sincerely attend to the public ministry, with minds prepared to receive the truth in the love of it; though we may possibly err in matters of less moment, yet as to all things necessary to our eternal salvation, our faith shall be inviolably secured; and this is as much as any honest man needs, or as any honest church can promise.

2. From hence also I infer, that in the matters of our faith and religion, God doth expect that we should make use of our own reason and judgment. For to what end should he put us upon searching the scriptures, but that thereby we may inform ourselves what those things are which he hath required us to believe and practise? But if it were his mind that we should wholly rely upon the authority of our church, or of our spiritual guides, and submit our faith to their dictates without any examination, what a needless and impertinent employment would this be for us, to search and consult the scriptures? Consult them, for what, if we are not to follow their guidance and direction, and to take the measures of our faith and manners from them? And if for this end God hath obliged us to consult them, (as to be sure it can be for no other end,) then he hath obliged us to employ our own reason and judgment, to consider what they say, and inquire what they mean; otherwise he hath obliged us to consult them to no purpose. It is as evident therefore that God will have us use our own reason and judgment in discerning what we are to believe, and what not, in religion, and not lazily rely upon others, to see and discern, and believe for us, as it is that he would have us search and consult the scriptures; and that, I

think, is evident enough, from what hath been said, to any, but one who is resolved not to admit of a conviction. And indeed seeing our reason is the noblest faculty we have, it would be very strange if God should not allow it to intermeddle in the highest and most important affair wherein he hath engaged us; and seeing it is our reason only that renders us capable of religion, what an odd thing would it be for God to forbid us making use of our reason in the most important concerns of religion, that is, in distinguishing what is true religion from what is false, and what we ought to believe, from what we ought to reject! I know it is pretended by those who urge the absolute necessity of submitting our reason to the church, that they allow men to make use of their own reason and judgment in discovering which the true church is, and that all they contend for is only this, that when once men have found the true church, they ought to inquire no further, but immediately to deliver up their reason and understanding to it, and believe every thing it believes, without any further examination. So that before men come into their church, it seems they are allowed to see for themselves, but after they are in, they must wink and follow their guides, and depute them to see and understand for them; which, to such men as are not quite sick of their own reason and understandings, should methinks be a great temptation to keep them out of their church for ever: for if I may judge for myself while I am out of it, but must not while I am in it, I must be very fond of parting with my own eyes and reason, if ever I come into it at all. But suppose I was always in it, and had been bred up in its communion from my infancy, will they allow me,

when I come to the full use of my reason, fairly to question whether theirs be the only true church or no, and to hear the reasons, and examine the scriptures, and consult the doctors on both sides? No, by no means; this I am forbid, under the penalty of being deprived of the benefit of priestly absolution. So that, in short, they will allow me to make use of my reason, if I have been bred an heretic, in order to my reconciliation to their church, but if I have never been an heretic, I must never use my reason to examine the truth either of my church or religion; that is to say, I may use my reason when there is no other remedy, and I must continue a heretic if I do not: but it were much better that I had never had occasion to use my reason at all. So that according to these men, the use of our reason in religion is only the least of two evils; it is not so bad as to continue a heretic, but if I had never been one it would be very bad, and a certain way to make me one; which methinks looks very odd, that the use of my reason should be necessary to reduce me from heresy, and the disuse of it as necessary, when I am reduced, to preserve me from relapsing into heresy. It is a memorable passage of the bishop of St. Mark in the council of Trent, "that seculars are obliged "humbly to obey that doctrine of faith which is "given them by the church, without disputing or "thinking further of it." Where by *the church* he means the clergy assembled in that council. So that, according to this man's doctrine, the faith of the people is a mere beast of burden, that, right or wrong, must bear all the load that the priests shall agree to lay upon it; and though it should feel itself oppressed

by them with never such gross contradictions or absurdities, it must think no further of it, but tamely trudge on without starting or boggling. At this rate, what tricks may not the priests play with the faith of the people? Let them invent what doctrines they please, to serve the interest of their own ambition and covetousness, the people must believe them without asking why; or if they should ask why, they must expect no other answer but this, Because we have thought fit to define and declare them. For it is by no means allowable that the people should exercise any private judgment of their own, about matters of faith; no, I confess it is not, where the matters proposed to their faith are false and erroneous; because it is a thousand to one, but, one time or other, the people will discover the frauds and impostures of the priests; and this would spoil all. But if the matters of faith are true, in all probability the further the people inquire into them, the better they will be satisfied about them; and if in the exercise of their private judgments they should in some particulars err, that is far more tolerable, than that they should be utterly deprived of the means of *being able to give an answer to every one that asks them a reason of the hope that is in them.* But when God hath given the people reasonable faculties, on purpose that by them they may be able to distinguish what is true from what is false, for any party of men to forbid them the use of these faculties, in distinguishing what is true from what is false in religion, in which above all things they are most highly concerned, it is a most injurious usurpation upon the common rights of human nature. For by this means our best

faculty is rendered useless to us in our greatest concerns; and whereas God gave it to us on purpose to guide and direct us, we are utterly deprived of its guidance where we have most need of it, and where it will prove most fatal to us, if we should happen to err and go astray.

DISCOURSE XXVII.

UPON

1 TIMOTHY I. 19.

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.

THESE words are a part of St. Paul's charge to his son Timothy, wherein he pathetically exhorts him, as a valiant bishop, to take all possible care to preserve the purity of the Christian doctrine in his diocese of Ephesus, which at that time abounded with false teachers, whose business it was to sow the tares of heresy and false doctrine in that large and fruitful field, the cultivation whereof St. Paul had committed to his charge. And that he might discharge this office the more effectually, the apostle warns him in the first place to take care of himself, that he did not suffer his own faith and manners to be depraved and corrupted by those lewd and irreligious principles which those antichristian seminaries were then scattering among his people; that so he might be an example to his flock, as well as a teacher of pure and undefiled religion. And this, ver. 18. he presses upon him, from the consideration of what had been foretold of him by divine inspiration, before ever he entered upon his ministry, viz. that *he should war a good warfare*, that is, prove a constant and courageous champion of the Christian faith; which prophecies he exhorts him to use his utmost endeavour to verify, both in his profession and practice, *by holding*, or, as it is in the original,

ἔχων, *having*, or *keeping faith and a good conscience;* which latter, viz. *a good conscience, some having put away, concerning* the former, viz. *faith, have made shipwreck.*

Before we proceed to the design of these words, it will be necessary briefly to explain some terms in them; as,

1. What is meant by *faith.*
2. What by *a good conscience.*
3. What by *putting away a good conscience:* and,
4. What by *making shipwreck of the faith.*

1. As for the first, What is here meant by *keeping the faith?* I answer, By this phrase *faith,* we are to understand the Christian creed, or summary of those necessary and essential doctrines whereof the Christian religion is composed: for at that time there was little else professed and taught in the Christian churches, but only the fundamental principles of Christianity, together with the nearest and most immediate inferences from them; so that few then misbelieved, but such as misbelieved in fundamentals, and every error in doctrine was generally a heresy. The Christian faith in those days lay within a narrow compass, and so it continued till the wantonness and curiosity of succeeding ages started disputable opinions, and, as they prevailed, adopted them into the family of faith; insomuch, that in process of time sundry opinions were received, that were never so much as heard of in the apostolical age; and as soon as they were received, they were presently declared necessary articles. And as for the contradictory opinions, though Christianity was little or nothing concerned, whether they were true or false, yet they seldom underwent any milder name than

heresy, or gentler doom than damnation; which hath been one of the grand occasions of all the ruptures and divisions that have happened in the Christian world. But as for the faith which the apostle here speaks of, it was of a much less bulk than what it is now arrived to by rolling through the wild opiniatory of sixteen disputation ages, which by degrees have swelled it from a short script into a large volume. For if we look into the New Testament, and into the writings of the most primitive fathers, we shall find the sums of Christian faith therein contained consisting of very few articles, and those such only as are essential to Christian religion, and such as wherein almost all the differing persuasions of Christians do to this day concentre. To hold the faith, therefore, is to persevere immoveably in the profession of the true Christian doctrine, so far as in us lies, and not to be prevailed upon to desert or forsake it, either through fear of persecution, or hope of temporal advantage, or the knavish arts and sly insinuations of false teachers.

2. The second term here to be explained is, What is meant by keeping *a good conscience?* Conscience in general is nothing but our practical judgment directing us what we ought to do, and what to avoid, and approving or reproving, according as we follow its directions or run counter to them. The conscience therefore is good or bad, according as the directions are which it gives for the government of our lives and actions. If our judgment be false and erroneous, and directs us to do what we ought to avoid, or to avoid what we ought to do, it is a bad conscience, that, instead of being a light to guide our steps in the paths of righteousness, is only a

wandering night-fire, that leads us into bogs and quagmires. As on the contrary, a good conscience is our practical judgment well informed, and truly directing us in the course of our actions what we ought to do, and what to avoid: for a good conscience is the true echo of God within us, that faithfully resounds his voice, and upon all opportunities of action repeats after him to our wills and affections. To keep a good conscience therefore implies two things;

First, To maintain in our minds a true sense of good and evil, and, so far forth as in us lies, to preserve our practical judgment pure from all false principles of action, and not to suffer either our vicious inclinations or worldly interest to warp and seduce it, and cause it to mistake evil for good, and good for evil.

Secondly, It implies our following the dictates and directions of a good conscience, our doing what it bids, and abstaining from what it forbids, and faithfully resigning ourselves to its conduct and government, and not to be prevailed upon by any temptation whatsoever to act counter to its sense and persuasion. In short, to keep a good conscience, is to live in a strict conformity to the dictates of a well-informed judgment, and not to allow ourselves in any course of action which this vice-god within us forbids or disapproves.

3. The third term to be explained in the text is, What is meant by *putting away a good conscience;* which being directly opposed here to *keeping a good conscience*, must denote the contraries to it. To put away a good conscience therefore is either,

First, To corrupt our own judgment of things and

actions out of vicious affection or worldly interest, and impose upon ourselves false notions of good and evil; or,

Secondly, To act directly contrary to our sense and persuasion; to leave undone those things which our own conscience tells us we ought to do, and to do those things which it tells us we ought not to do. In short, to put away a good conscience, is to live in any known course of sin, either of omission or commission; to practise contradictions to our own judgments, and to follow the inclinations of our wills against the light and conviction of our consciences.

4. The last inquiry is, What is here meant by *making shipwreck of the faith?* Which being here set in opposition to *holding* or *keeping the faith*, must signify oppositely, and consequently must denote, not holding and keeping it, or, which is the same thing, losing and abandoning it: for in this allegory the true Christian faith is represented as a ship, and a good conscience, or a pure and holy life, as the pilot that steers and governs it. And indeed in that state of things there was no other pilot; but purity of conscience and holiness of life was able to conduct and preserve this ship, and carry it safe through those incessant storms of persecution wherein at that time it was tossed and agitated. For when Christians have once thrown off the obligations of a good conscience, by abandoning themselves to a wicked and dissolute life, what is there left, to restrain them from abandoning their faith when it stands in competition with their worldly ease and interest? And though there should be no competition between their faith and interest, but they might freely enjoy them both without any disturb-

ance, yet their wicked lives will naturally tempt them to corrupt their faith with wicked principles; of which latter, in the next verse, he gives an eminent instance in Hymenæus, who had not wholly deserted Christianity, but only renounced one fundamental article of it, viz. the resurrection of the dead: as of the former, he gives another instance in Alexander, who, as it seems probable, had, through the fear of persecution, deserted Christianity itself.

The words thus explained may be resolved into this sense; That men's living wickedly against the convictions and obligations of their conscience, doth very much expose them to apostasy from true religion into gross and impious errors. Thus to *the love of money*, which *is the root of all evil*, the apostle attributes men's *erring from the faith*, 1 Tim. vi. 10. And that which exposed those *silly women*, 2 Tim. iii. 6. to the seduction of false teachers, was their being *laden with sins*, and *led away with divers lusts*. And the same apostle ascribes Demas's apostasy to his covetousness, or inordinate *love of this present world*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. But that I may evince this truth more fully, I shall give you some particular instances of the mighty tendencies there are in every vicious course of life to error and apostasy from true religion.

1. It corrupts and debauches men's reason and understanding.

2. It renders the principles of true religion uneasy to their minds.

3. It deprives men of the highest encouragements to constancy and steadfastness in religion.

4. It weakens the natural force of their consciences, which is the greatest restraint from apostasy.

5. It strengthens the temptations to apostasy.

6. It provokes God to give us up to the power of delusion.

1. Living in any known and wilful course of sin corrupts and debauches men's reason and understandings. So long as a man lives in any known sin, he doth not only live without, but against his reason; which, instead of being the guide of his actions, hath nothing at all to do with them, but, like an idle spectator, doth only behold the brutish scene without any part or concern in it. And whilst a man thus abandons himself to the government of his own blind will, and lives not only in the perpetual neglect, but contempt of his reason, it is impossible for him not to waste and impair it. For as our rational faculties are improved and perfected by exercise, so they naturally languish and decay through disuse and inactivity; and consequently the less use we make of them in the government of our lives and actions, which is their proper office and employment, like standing waters, they must corrupt and putrefy. And indeed there is no impure lust but doth by its own natural efficacy disable men's reason and understanding: for while we are in these bodies, our mind is fain to work by bodily instruments, and to make use of brains, and blood, and spirits, in all its operations; and according as their temper is good or bad, its operations will be more or less perfect: but while a man indulges himself in any impure affection, that will naturally distemper these organs of his mind, and indispose them for the use of his reason. For so madness, which is such a distemperature of the brain, and blood, and spirits, as doth wholly alienate them from the use of reason and discourse, is usually

found to be the effect of some wild and extravagant affection, such as pride or covetousness, anger or fearfulness, jealousy or lust; and if these passions, being once arrived to their utmost rage and excess, do so often run into downright madness and distraction, to be sure every inordinate degree of them must be a tendency towards it, a great disturbance of mind, though not a total distraction; and how much they exceed their due bounds and measures, by so much they must taint and vitiate these necessary instruments of our mind and reason. Thus every inordinate lust doth by a natural influence disturb men's reason, and sully the clearness of their discerning faculties. So that what clearness is to the eye of the body, that purity from vicious affection is to the eye of the mind; it brightens its apprehensions, and renders its conceptions of things more quick, distinct, and vigorous: whereas, on the contrary, all disorderly affection doth more or less cloud and disturb the brain, chill or inflame the spirits, hurry them into tumultuous motions, or render them listless and unactive; by which continual disorders our discerning faculties must by degrees be extremely weakened and confounded. And whilst the mind is thus lost in the fogs of inordinate affection, it is an easy matter to seduce and mislead it, it being, through the dimness of its sight, apt to be imposed upon by false colours, and tinctured with prejudice and undue apprehensions of things. Weak minds are easily abused, especially in matters of religion, which being placed beyond the prospect of sense, require a severer attention in order to the forming of right apprehensions concerning them; and therefore the more men weaken their under-

standings by their lusts, the more they must be exposed to errors and delusions. But then,

2. Living in any known course of sin renders the principles of true religion uneasy to men's minds. Whilst a man leads a wicked life, his religious principles, if they are pure and true, will perpetually reproach and upbraid him: for there are no contraries in nature more irreconcileable to one another, than true faith and bad manners; the great design of all true faith being to move and persuade men to abstain from all ungodliness, and *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* If therefore a man's faith be true and genuine, he cannot live wickedly without acting against the full persuasion of his own mind, which must necessarily render him very uneasy; for in this state of things he acts with a self-condemning judgment, and every compliance with his inclination sets him at odds with his reason; all the while he is meditating any wicked design, he struggles with his conscience, and confronts and outrages his own convictions; and when he hath acted it, every reflection he makes on it is a bitter invective against himself: thus, so long as the principles of true religion possess his mind, he finds himself continually hagged and oppressed by them; they sit as an uneasy load upon his soul, and will not suffer him to sin in quiet, but perpetually cause his sinful delights to go off with an ungrateful farewell, and recoil upon him in many a sickly qualm and convulsion. In which state of things he hath no other remedy, but either to forsake his principles or his lusts, or to live in perpetual variance with himself; and therefore, if he still resolve to sin on, in all probability he will soon grow quite weary of true re-

ligion, and quit his mind as soon as possibly he can of those stern and inflexible principles which create these discords in his breast. And whilst he is in this temper, it will be an easy matter to pervert him to any religion that will give ease to his straitlaced conscience, and cast a more favourable aspect on his lust; for being resolved to follow his vicious inclinations, he now sees through them, and understands by them; and whilst his mind runs upon the false bias of his lusts, that religion which is most grateful to them will seem most reasonable to him. Shew him a way how he may worship God acceptably without the expense of a strict attention, and the inward devotion of a pure heart, and heavenly affections; merely by numbering so many prayers on a string of beads, by seeing a priest act over such a set of ceremonies, and hearing him in varied tones sometimes pronounce, and sometimes murmur a form of words in an unknown language; and though at first view it may seem very absurd to him, yet the very looseness and carnality will be apt to engage his affections to it, and then they, by degrees, will go near to wheedle his understanding into a more favourable opinion of it. Propose to him an expedient how he may go to heaven at last, without undergoing the severities of a sincere repentance and amendment; tell him there is a certain church in the world, whose priests, if he confess his sins to them with any degree of sorrow and remorse, have full power to pardon and absolve him; so that, if he do but take care not to die without confession, however he lives, he cannot miscarry for ever: he may indeed go into a very hot place, called purgatory, and there suffer a while very grievous things before he get to heaven;

but if, instead of parting with his lusts while he lives, he will part with his money when he dies, he may at easy rates purchase of that church such a number of masses, requiems, and indulgencies, as will in all probability soon procure his dismission from those temporary sufferings into eternal happiness: how oddly soever this doctrine may appear to his reason, to be sure it will be charming enough to his lusts; and when once a man's lusts are retained, the cause is half carried at the bar of his judgment. And so in all other instances, it is a great disadvantage to true religion, and as great an advantage to false, that men's faith and reason are so much swayed and biassed by their lusts. For though there is no religion can be true but what is pure and holy, yet it is the holiness of true religion that doth provoke their lusts against it, and it is their lusts that do provoke their reason; and when all is done, there is nothing doth more strongly incline or frequently pervert depraved and wicked minds to false religion, than its compliance with their vicious affections, though this very thing is one of the most certain signs in nature of its falsehood.

3. Living in any known course of sin deprives men of the greatest encouragements to constancy and steadfastness in the true religion: for doubtless the highest encouragement to perseverance in the truth against all oppositions and temptations, is the hope of those glorious rewards that await them in the world to come. It was this that guarded the faith of the ancient martyrs safe through all the rage and cruelty of their persecutors, their having an eye to *the recompense of reward*, the sight of which inspired the drooping souls with an invincible cou-

rage; made them despise racks, and wheels, and flames, and exult and triumph under the most exquisite torments. And indeed what less encouragement than the hope of being eternally happy within a few moments could have enabled a company of tender virgins, delicate matrons, infirm and aged bishops, to endure those long and dolorous martyrdoms, as many times they did, when their tormentors took their turns, from morn to night, and plied them with all kinds of tortures, till oftentimes they were forced to give over, and confess themselves overcome either through weariness or compassion? But now, by indulging ourselves in any known course of sin, we throw away this sovereign cordial, and leave ourselves naked and destitute of all the mighty supports it is able to give us under any temptation to apostasy. For how can we hope for any good from God, and much less for so great a good as a heaven of immortal joys amounts to, whilst we persist in open rebellion against him; especially when he hath expressly suspended this mighty recompense upon our constant and faithful obedience to his will, and told us plainly beforehand, that we might know what to trust to, that if we fail of this, he will be so far from admitting us into that place and state of blessedness, that he will banish us for ever from his presence into outer darkness, and eternal wretchedness and despair? When by wilful sin therefore we have cast away our hope of heaven, what have we left to support our constancy to the truth, if ever we should be called to suffer for it? How can it be expected, that, rather than renounce our religion, we should be contented to part with our goods, or liberties, or lives, when all our hope is shut up in this

life, and we have no prospect of compensation either here or hereafter? If ever therefore we would be steadfast to the truth against all temptations, we must above all things take care by a holy life to cherish and keep alive the hopes of heaven in our breasts, which is the only anchor that can hold and secure us in a stormy sea from making shipwreck of our faith.

4. Living in any known course of sin weakens the natural force of men's consciences, which is the greatest restraint from apostasy. Indeed for men to apostatize from their religion, to secure their worldly interest, is a thing so base and infamous, so foul an instance of a cowardly, degenerous, and prostitute soul, that if a man were under no other restraint, but only that sense of honour that is lodged in all brave minds, he would scorn so mean, so poor a condescension. But yet, when all is done, there is no such powerful restraint upon men as that of a good conscience, which is the natural bridle by which God curbs our headstrong nature, and keeps it from flying out into all the wild extravagancies it is inclined to. For it is from God, and in God's stead. that conscience acts, who is the most powerful being in the world: when it commands, it is with God's authority; when it rebukes, it is with God's majesty; when it applauds, it is with God's complacency: it proceeds not upon principles of mere policy or prudence, which require us to act this way now, and anon the contrary, as circumstances alter; but upon the awful principles of divinity, which oblige us by all that we can hope or fear for ever, and require of us the selfsame things and actions in all circumstances; and the sole reason it insists on is the will

of God, whose pleasure or displeasure can make us happy or miserable for ever. The voice of conscience is not, "This I judge most expedient for thee "to do, and this to avoid;" but, "This thou must do, "and this avoid, as thou tenderest the love of God, "and dreadest his everlasting hatred and revenge:" and it is no less than eternal bliss that conscience allures our hope with, and eternal vengeance that it alarms our fear with; and if men will not be withheld by such powerful restraints as these, what can withhold them? Whilst therefore a man cherishes his conscience by complying with it, and follows its directions, this, if any thing, will secure his steadfastness to the truth against all temptations; whilst this hath any power over him, he will as soon eat fire as sacrifice his faith to his interest. For, for a man to renounce his religion upon any prospect of temporal gain or loss, is such a flagitious violation of all that is sacred, such a monstrous instance of high treason against God, such an open blasphemy of his truth, such a bold defiance of his majesty, and, in a word, such a complication of vile perfidy, base ingratitude, and impious falsehood, that but to think of it is like looking down from a stupendous precipice, that swims the head and strikes the mind with horror and amazement; so that while a man's conscience hath any power over him, he will no more be able to prevail with himself to commit the one, than to throw himself headlong down from the other, whilst he is under the horror of the prospect; and he will find it so much more easy to endure the worst of persecutions, than to commit such an outrage and violence on his conscience, and undergo those horrible reflections and stinging remorses that must fol-

low it: but after a man by wilful sinning hath often wounded his conscience, the natural tenderness of it will by degrees wear off, till at length it grows quite callous and insensible. For what is reported of Mithridates, that by often drinking of poison he had so familiarized it to his constitution, that at length it sat quietly on his stomach, and gave him no disturbance, is true of conscience, which at first recoils at every sinful potion, and cannot swallow it without suffering violent spasms and convulsions; but having been a while accustomed to it, it by degrees grows more and more natural, till at length it goes more glibly down without straining, and goes quietly off without remorse or reluctance. And when once a man's conscience is frozen over by a custom of sinning, it will every day grow harder and harder, and at length be able to bear the heaviest loads of guilt without relenting; and when once things are reduced to this state, good and evil, virtue and vice, are things indifferent to him, which he chooses or refuses as they come to hand, and are more or less subservient to his present convenience. He can blaspheme and pray, oppress and give alms with the same unconcernedness of mind; and to act the Devil or the saint are parts so indifferent to him, that he can perform them both with the same remorselessness. And when a man is thus got loose from the restraints of his conscience, there is nothing so bad that can come amiss to him. If therefore, while he stands in this posture, his temporal interest should chance to beckon him to change the best religion in the world for the worst, to pray to insensible images and dead men's ghosts instead of the everlasting God, to let go substances to catch at

shadows and ceremonies, and to part with the most rational truths for the most palpable and fulsome contradictions; he hath no principle in him strong enough to withhold him from a base compliance, his conscience being laid fast asleep, which, whilst awake, would have trembled at such an horrid proposal. And though by thus prostituting his faith to his interest, he at once renounces his God, his Saviour, and all his hopes of future immortality, yet his insensible and remorseless heart is no more touched or affected with it, than if it were the slightest peccadillo. Thus by letting go a good conscience men pave themselves an easy way to apostasy from true religion, which otherwise would be one of the most craggy and difficult passages in all the highway to hell.

5. Living in any known course of sin doth very much strengthen and enforce the temptations to apostasy. He who lives under the conduct and government of a good conscience, takes care to regulate his affections towards the things of this world, so as neither to fear the evils of it too much, nor love the goods of it too well; but makes a just and equal estimate of both, and by that proportions his affections towards them; and he who doth this, disarms them of their tempting power, which is chiefly owing to ourselves, and the false estimate we make of them. It is our own imagination that gives life and efficacy to the charms and terrors of the world, and renders them so successful and victorious; we fancy that to be in them which is not, and so are affected, not so much with the things themselves, as with the false representations that we make of them. But he who, by following the dictates of a good con-

science, hath reduced his wild affections within the lists of reason and sobriety, can from thence defy the world, and maintain his post against all its temptations. He loves its goods no better than they deserve, and consequently he loves them not so well as to part with his virtue, his innocence, and his soul for them. He dreads its evils no further than they are truly dreadful, and consequently is fully satisfied that to sin is much more dreadful than to suffer; and he hath found by often experience, that in the faithful discharge of his duty there is far more peace, more joy, and satisfaction, than in all the vain allurements of this world. He hath found another heaven upon earth, besides these temporary enjoyments; a heaven within his own breast composed of joyous hopes and blessed expectations; and in this heaven hath often found himself a thousand times more happy than among all the festivities of an earthly paradise, and therefore knows very well that he is bid to his loss whenever he is tempted to exchange the one for the other. He is throughly sensible, having already found it to his smart, that by sinning he shall sustain a much heavier loss, and expose himself to far more exquisite agonies of mind than any this world can threaten him withal; and therefore certainly reckons upon it, that whenever to avoid a sin he incurs a suffering, he wisely chooses of two evils the least. And while his soul stands thus affected, it is shot-proof against all temptations, and much more against those temptations which solicit him to renounce his religion, and in which he knows by experience there is far more good than the world can propose to him in exchange for it. He knows both how little the world, and how much

true religion is worth; and having made a just estimate of both, to propose to him any worldly hope as a price for his faith, is the same thing as to offer a miser dross for his gold. His mind is fixed in this persuasion, that all the mischiefs this world can do him are inconsiderable to one who must live for ever in another unspeakably happy or miserable; and therefore to threaten him into apostasy with any worldly fear, is to attempt to blow up a rock of marble with a squib of wildfire. But when once a man hath taken off the restraints of his conscience from his wild affections, and let them loose to the world, they will aid and assist its temptations against him, and animate them with a thousand times more life and vigour than is in their own natures. For as for the goods of this world, they can never bewitch us as they do, did we not give a dress to them; we paint their faces, and varnish them over with an artificial beauty, and then fall in love with our own fucus; and so much as we value and affect them beyond their natural worth, so much power we give them to conquer and enslave us. When therefore, by leading a sensual and wicked life, a man has wholly devoted himself to the world, he hath put himself into the world's power to be commanded and disposed of as it pleases. And now, if any worldly good beckons and invites him, his mad affection will presently hurry him after it, though it be through thick and thin, through the most flagitious and enormous courses. If any worldly evil threaten and alarm him, he must immediately fly, though it be from virtue and innocence, from God and heaven, and all that is sacred in religion. His affections have rendered him a mere lackey to

the goods and evils that are without him, and wherever they send him he must go, wherever they lead him he must follow, let their vagaries be never so wild or wicked. If therefore, while his soul is thus enslaved to the world, he should be tempted by him to apostatize from his religion, what hath he to restrain or secure him? For, ever since he got loose from his conscience, he is wholly led by his affections; and these being chained and fastened to the world, hale him after it, which way soever it moves. So long as his religion and his worldly interest consist, and go hand in hand, he is very well content to own and follow it; but if ever a storm or persecution should part them, in all probability he will follow his interest, and, like the treacherous Orpha, give his religion a parting kiss and leave it. For his heart is now so wedded to the world, that he esteems nothing so good as its goods, and nothing so evil as its evils; and the one being his heaven, and the other his hell, all other considerations are overcome by them; and to obtain the one, and avoid the other, he must stick at nothing, no, not at renouncing his God and his religion, together with all his hopes of a future immortality.

6. And lastly, Living in any known course of sin provokes God to give us up to the power of delusion: for so long as men submit themselves to the guidance and direction of a good conscience, the Spirit of God, who is a Spirit of truth, abides with them, and not only directs their wills, but also informs their understandings, and enables them to discern the beauty and reality of those heavenly truths, which he hath revealed to us in the holy scriptures. For though, since he hath revealed already the whole will of God

to us concerning our eternal salvation, we have no reason to expect that he will reveal new truths to us; yet seeing, so far forth as it is necessary, he hath promised and engaged that he will cooperate with us, to enable us as well to understand the will of God, as to perform it; we have the greatest reason in the world to depend upon it, that so long as we cherish his heavenly inspirations, by yielding to them our free and ready compliance, he will be so far an assisting genius to our understandings, as to suggest to us those truths which he hath already revealed, and set them before our eyes in so fair a light, as that we shall not fail more clearly to discern, and more distinctly to apprehend them, than otherwise we should or could have done. For when he writes his truth upon our minds, it is with such a victorious sunbeam, as will endure neither cloud nor shadow before it. Whenever he speaks, he speaks not to our ears, but to our minds, and represents things nakedly and immediately to our understandings. He converses with our spirits, as spirits do with spirits, without involving his sense in articulate sounds or material representations; but objects it to us in its own naked light, and characterizes it immediately on our understandings. And as he proposes the divine light to us, so he also illuminates our minds to discern and comprehend it: he raises and exalts our intellectual powers, and as a vital form to the light of our reason, invigorates and actuates it, and thereby renders its apprehension of things more quick, and piercing, and sagacious. Thus doth the Holy Spirit more or less assist us in the true understanding of divine things, as he finds us more or less compliant with his heavenly pleasure; and though he stands

no more obliged to render our minds infallible, than our wills impeccable, yet so long as by our sincere obedience to his holy suggestions, we keep ourselves under his conduct and direction, we may depend upon it he will either preserve us from all dangerous errors, or if for just reasons he should permit us to fall into any such, they shall not prove dangerous to us, but either we shall be convinced of them while we live, or obtain pity and pardon for them when we die. But whilst we persist in any wilful course of sin, we do not only violate our own conscience, but also repel those good motions of the Spirit of God, whereby he strives to reduce and reclaim us; in doing which, we continually grieve him, and if we do not forbear, shall at length provoke him wholly to forsake and abandon us, to give us up to our own hearts' lusts as desperate wretches, with whom he hath hitherto strove and struggled in vain, and of whose future recovery there remains no further hope or prospect. And when he hath forsaken us, our mind will not only be left naked and destitute of all those helps and advantages for the understanding of divine truths, which it receives from him, but also be exposed to the cheats and fallacies of evil spirits, whose recreation it is to put tricks upon our minds; to banter and play upon our easy faith, to cast mists before our eyes, and therein to juggle away all true religion from us, and foist in the room of it the most fulsome errors and mistakes. For so the apostle tells us of antichrist, the great deceiver, that he should *come with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness to them that perish; because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved.* And that for that cause, viz. their not receiving *the truth in the*

love of it, God should send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that is, by abandoning them to the power of cheating and deluding spirits: *that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,* 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. And God grant that this at last prove not our fate, that because we have sinned against the clearest light, and gone astray in all unrighteousness, under the best and purest religion in the world, we are not at length given up by God to follow the wild delusions of antichrist, and to believe all those fulsome lies and impostures, which he from age to age hath been imposing upon the world. But whether it prove thus or no, this I am sure of, that by persisting in any vicious course, against the light and conviction of our consciences, we highly provoke Almighty God to withdraw his grace from us, and give us up to our own hearts' lusts; and when this is done, our own hearts' lusts will soon betray and give up our faith to false and vicious principles of religion.

And now having shewn at large what strong and prevalent tendencies there are in a wicked life to apostasy from true religion, I shall conclude this argument with two or three inferences.

1. From hence I infer, what a great malignity there is in men's being inconstant to and apostatizing from the true religion, in compliance with their sinful affections; it being, as you see, the ill daughter of a bad mother, (a debauched and a dissolute conscience,) and consequently partaking of all its natural bane and malignity, even as all other bad effects do of the malignant nature of their bad causes. But the truth of this will more fully appear by con-

sidering the particular evils which men's inconstancy to, and proneness to revolt from the true religion implies; of which I shall give you these five instances:

1. The great impiety of it.
2. The desperate folly of it.
3. The foul dishonesty of it.
4. The shameful cowardice of it.
5. The vast hazard and insecurity of it.

1. Consider the great impiety of it. He who can part with his religion, or any principle of it, upon any other terms than a full conviction of the falsehood of it, is either a downright atheist, who, believing no religion to be true, governs himself by this principle, that the wisest course is to profess none but that which is uppermost, and most for his interest; or a profane and impious wretch, who, though he believes his own religion true, exchanges it for another which he believes to be false, upon no other consideration, but so much temporal advantage to boot: by which he plainly declares, that in the balance of his estimation the odds between truth and falsehood, the declarations of God, and the impostures of the Devil, is so inconsiderable, that the least addition of the transitory goods of this world to the latter, renders it of sufficient weight to turn the scale against the former, and that for his part he is not much concerned whether the Almighty be his friend or foe; and provided he may but enjoy his ease and pleasure a few years longer here, he is very well contented to part with all his hopes and interest in God for ever. For this is the natural construction of men's apostasy from the true religion, in consideration of their worldly interest, that that in-

terest is in their esteem far more eligible than God with all his power and goodness; that it is better to be without God in the world, than without preferment; and that that man makes a very good bargain, who gets a good place in exchange for his Maker, and with the treacherous Judas sells his Saviour, though it be but for thirty pieces of silver: which is such a monstrous degree of impiety, as one would think should be sufficient to scare and affright the most courageous sinner that hath but the least apprehension of God, or sense of good and evil. But then,

2. Consider the desperate folly of men's abandoning their religion, in compliance with their vicious affections. For he who without through conviction abandons the profession of his religion, whether it be true or false, doth together with that most certainly abandon all the blessed rewards, and incur all the dreadful penalties, that true religion promises and denounces; because though his religion perhaps may be false, yet in renouncing it whilst he believes it true, his will doth as maliciously renounce the true religion, as if it really were so. He thought it true, and yet renounced it, by which he plainly declares, that if it had been true, he would have renounced it; so that whether it be true or false, it is all one to him, his will is the same, his crime and guilt the same; it is true religion he intentionally renounces, and therefore in so doing he doth intentionally renounce all his concern and interest in true religion. Now what a desperate piece of folly is this, for a man to part with all his stock in the common bank of religion, which, if it be not a downright sham and imposture, is of everlasting moment and concern to him, only

for a present gratification of some vain and unreasonable lust; to divorce himself for ever from the love of God, to quit all title and interest in the precious blood of the Saviour of the world, only to curry a shortlived favour with men, with men *whose breath is in their nostrils*, and who within a few days or years must go off the stage, and leave us here perhaps forlorn and destitute; to part with all my glorious hopes of heaven, which are my best heaven upon earth; and which is worse, with heaven itself, where I have treasures of bliss sufficient to maintain me in a most happy port to eternal ages, only to gain or secure a transitory estate or preferment; which, while I have it, cannot make me happy, and from which, ere long, I shall be torn and divided, and not be a farthing the better for, for ever; to expose one's self as a public spectacle of scorn and contempt to God and angels, and all the wise and good part of the rational world, for a short extemporary blaze of pompous splendour and greatness, which lies at the mercy of every counter-blast of fortune, and in all probability will ere long expire in smoke and stink, wretchedness and infamy; to plunge one's self headlong into all the agonies and torments, the horrors and desperations of a woful eternity, only to escape a short persecution and a glorious martyrdom; when a little after, perhaps, I shall suffer a great deal more and longer under the gout, stone, or strangury, without the comfort of dying in a brave cause, and being assured of an immortal recompense, than I could have done under the hand of the executioner with it? And yet all these mad pranks that man plays at once, who abandons his religion in compliance with his lusts.

3. Consider the foul dishonesty of it. For, besides that our religion being the most sacred pledge committed to us by God for our own use, and the use of our latest posterity, we cannot viciously desert and abandon it without betraying of God, and falsifying our trust to him; and which is worse, without squandering away the most inestimable good that ever he committed to men, upon our own base lusts, and his most execrable enemies, which is dishonesty blackened with the foulest ingratitude: besides this, I say, by forsaking our religion in compliance with any lewd affection, we do not only do a dishonest thing at present, but also totally discard the obligations to honesty for the future: for there is nothing can rationally oblige a man to be throughly honest, but only his religion, or inward sense that it is his indispensable duty towards God, before whose righteous tribunal he must one day give an account of all his actions. The two great motives of human action are religion and worldly interest: now as for religion, that consists of fixed and unalterable principles, which will by no means ply or bend to the alterations of outward affairs and circumstances; but do in all conditions move and oblige us with equal force and vigour; whereas worldly interest is a fickle and mutable thing, that varies and alters with every outward turn and revolution: so that that which is my interest to-day, may prove my damage to-morrow; and if it should, whatever part I act to-day, it will oblige me to act the contrary to-morrow. When therefore a man hath let go his religion, and hath nothing but his interest to hold him, it is cross or pile for the future, whether you find him an honest man or a knave; because from henceforth he

will be knave or honest according as it serves his turn, and that which serves his turn to-day, may prove his loss and prejudice to-morrow; so that whether to-day or to-morrrow he proves a true man or a cheat, wholly depends upon the die of fortune, and you must consult his stars to find the lucky hour or moment when you may safely trust him. For after the wretch hath been so perfidious as to renounce his God and his religion, he hath no one principle remaining in him upon which you can fasten any lasting confidence. As for his interest, that is such a fickle and inconstant thing, that there is no trusting it; if it plead for you now, the next turn of affairs it may be retained against you; and the man being got loose from all the ties and obligations of fidelity, you may be sure he will stick at nothing, be it never so foul, that his present interest invites him to serve himself; he will make no bones, whenever he hath a fair opportunity, to cheat and betray his own father, or supplant his dearest friend or benefactor; and what should hinder him, his conscience and religion being gone, and with them all binding principles of truth and honesty? For when a man forsakes his religion out of any vicious affection, he doth in effect make this public declaration to the world; "By this "my own act and deed, I do here for ever renounce "all the obligations to honesty and fair dealing with "God or men, and am resolved for the future to be "deaf and inexorable to all the importunities of con-"science and religion. From henceforth I will listen "to no other call but that of my worldly interest; "when that bids me be honest I will be honest, and "when it bids me play the knave I will play the "knave; and therefore for the future I warn all

"that know me, to trust me no further than they "can make it my interest to be true, and not to "venture the most trifling matter in which they are "unwilling to be wronged, either upon my faith, "word, or oath, without demanding of me such "ample securities, as may render it impossible for "me to wrong them without wronging myself: for "this is the principle I now intend to live by, That "is always best and fittest to be done, that is most "subservient to my present interest." This, in construction of fact, is the profession which that man takes up, who, in compliance with any vicious affection, abandons the profession of his religion.

4. Consider the shameful cowardice of it. The advantages of true religion are great enough to encourage a mind of any constancy or firmness to charge through the greatest difficulties the world can interpose between them and him. Who, that hath the spirit of a man, would ever boggle to wade through a narrow shallow stream of temporary sufferings, whilst on the further shore he beholds a heaven of immortal joys ready to receive and reward him? But for a man to turn his back, and run away from God and heaven, for fear only of being disappointed by some lewd, covetous, or ambitious hope, is such an instance of vile, prostitute baseness, as is beneath even contempt and derision. For what danger or difficulty dares that wretch encounter, that dares not stand by his religion, in which he confesses all his future hopes are involved, for fear of losing such a place, or being disappointed of such a preferment, which within a few days or years he knows very well he must lose for ever? He who hath a mind capable of being scared out of his religion by such

mean considerations as these, is good for nothing, but only to be made the football of fortune, to be kicked up and down upon her scornful toe at pleasure, who, by threatening him with the smallest evil, can huff him out of the greatest good, and finding him a wretched passive thing, that hath not strength enough to resist her weakest impressions, makes him her sport and recreation, and turns him into any thing, and tosses him whither she pleases; from truth to falsehood, from God to the Devil, and from heaven to hell, without the least control or opposition. For the poor man's soul is grown so tender and effeminate, that, for the greatest good in all the world, he cannot endure the least air of suffering to blow upon him. Tell him of suffering for righteousness' sake, and the very thought of it frights and appals him. Present but a persecution at his breast, and bid him stand and deliver, and the crestfallen poltroon is presently ready to cry out, "O "spare my life, spare my skin! and take my religion, "take my God, and all my hopes of heaven and im-"mortality." And who but an infamous coward would ever endure to be hectored out of so vast a good by the weak and impotent evils of this world; which, if they do their worst, can only rob him of a few transitory enjoyments, which, without their constraint, he must ere long take his leave of for ever? How ridiculously meanspirited would it be for a man to deliver up his purse to a thief, who he knows hath no other weapon but a slender switch to hurt and offend him! But for a man to deliver up his religion, and with that his God and his heaven, at the demand of a short skin-deep affliction, which can only disease him for a few moments, and shall then

determine in everlasting pleasure and delight, is a thousand times more mean and ridiculous.

5. And lastly, Consider the vast hazard and insecurity of a man's parting with his religion, in compliance with his vicious affections: for that which moves him to it is only his prospect of living at ease a few years longer, or gratifying some covetous desire of ambition; but whether he obtain these ends by parting with his religion, is vastly hazardous and insecure. Perhaps, when I have acted this impious and perfidious part, I may be cast into such circumstances as may force me upon impartial reflections, and make me see, whether I will or no, the blackness and infamy of my revolt and apostasy; which, if it should happen, would inevitably raise such a swarm of horrors in my conscience, and cast me into such agonies and convulsions of soul, as will render me a hell and a devil to myself, and give me a thousand times more pain and uneasiness than all those temporal evils could have done, for fear of which I ran away from my religion. And if to shun poverty, I should throw myself into desperation; if to avoid a prison, which to an innocent mind with a righteous cause can make a heaven upon earth, I should cast myself into a hell upon earth; if to keep in a whole skin, I should bring upon myself the intolerable anguish of a wounded spirit; if to escape being rejected, disgraced, and discountenanced by men, I should expose myself to the perpetual clamour and reproaches of my own conscience: if these things, I say, should happen, as it is very probable they may, I shall find myself miserably disappointed of that ease and quiet enjoyment, for the sake of which I basely abandoned my religion; I shall find that, to

save my garments from being singed, I have thrown my body into a consuming flame, and only exposed my breast to save my buckler. But then suppose this should not happen; suppose my conscience should be stupid and insensible enough to bear the guilt of my apostasy without remorse or relenting; yet my prospect of gain and advancement in this world is extremely hazardous and insecure. For it is a thousand to one, but they to whose religion I turn, and upon whose favour I depend, will, by one means or other, discover my falsehood and insincerity; and if in the course of my actions, or any other suspicious indication, they should find cause to be jealous that I embraced their religion only to serve my interest, and against the persuasion of my own mind; if they are wise, they will treat me as a dangerous person, upon whom there is no reliance; for how can they imagine that I should be true to them, who have been false to my religion? It is a proverb among the Jews, *that proselytes are not to be trusted to the tenth generation;* and by too many woful instances in our own neighbourhood, we find it a maxim in some men's politics, that a new convert is no more to be trusted than an old heretic. And though for a while they may think fit to use me as a proper tool to serve a present design, yet to be sure they will use me no longer than they needs must; and when I have done their work, I must expect to be thrust out, to make room for such as they can more safely depend on. And if this should not happen, as it is very probable it may, yet seeing all human affairs are liable to perpetual turns and mutabilities, perhaps upon the next revolution a contrary interest may appear upon the stage, and

then I shall find myself deserted of all my present supports and dependencies, and, like a forlorn wretch, utterly abandoned both by God and men, without any other company to entertain me in this my mournful solitude, besides the woful remembrances of my guilt and shame. To such infinite uncertainties of obtaining their ends are those miserable men exposed, who desert their religion in pursuit of their worldly interest. And so I have done with the first inference: but then,

2. From hence I infer, How cautious a man ought to be in changing his religion, or any principles of it, lest that which induces him to it be not so much his conviction as his profligate conscience. I do not pretend, that men are always to maintain the same persuasion in matters of religion; for such an obligation would as effectually serve the interest of false religion as of true. Whatever some men pretend, we are all of us, from top to bottom, a company of fallible creatures; and if we are in an error, as it is possible we may, it is our duty to endeavour to be better informed. Nor do I deny, but an honest-minded man, without being in the least influenced by a bad conscience, may be innocently, or at least pitiably seduced from truth to error by false colours and probable appearances, for want of sufficient sagacity to distinguish between sophistry and true reason. But if, in compliance with any vicious affection, or in pursuit of any worldly interest, a man deserts the truth, and takes up false and erroneous principles, his error is no longer imputable to the weakness of his understanding, but to the wickedness of his will; and a wilful error in his faith will prove as fatal and as damnable to him, as a wilful wickedness in his

manners; and whenever his wretched soul shall appear before the great Searcher of hearts, it shall certainly be treated by him as a wilful apostate, that hath perfidiously renounced his baptismal vow, and abjured his God, his Saviour, truth, and religion. And seeing it is thus, it very highly concerns men, as they love themselves, or have any regard of their own everlasting well-being, not to desert their religion, or any principle of it, upon any other motive than a thorough conviction of its falsehood; not to suffer themselves to be seduced from it by any temporal interest or vicious affection, lest in so doing they reprobate themselves from God, and all the blessed hopes of a glorious eternity hereafter. For when men are upon changing their persuasions in religion, it is an ordinary thing for their interests and passions so to intermingle with their reasonings, that, without some care and observation of themselves, they will not be able to discern which of the two hath the greater influence upon them; insomuch, that I am very apt to think that there are a great many careless and unreflecting people that are hurried merely by their interests and passions out of one religious persuasion into another, who yet, through gross neglect and inobservance of themselves, believe themselves to be converts upon pure reason and conviction. Perhaps upon the solicitations of worldly interest their minds were wrought into a strong inclination to a change; insomuch, that they vehemently wish that they could but satisfy their reason and conscience of the truth and reality of that new persuasion, which these their importunate passions so earnestly invite them to embrace; and then, with this strong bias of worldly interest

upon their minds, away they run, hunting after reasons and arguments to convince and satisfy themselves; and if, in this heat of affection, they can but light upon any little show of probability, that will quickly improve them into irrefragable proofs and demonstrations: for when a man inquires whether such a doctrine be true, with a strong inclination of will to find it so, he will be afraid to consult the reasons and arguments against it, lest they should convince him that it is false, and thereby defeat his inclination. And when once a man is so prepossessed as that he will listen only to one side of the question, be that side never so absurd and ridiculous, it is a hard case if he cannot find reasons enough to wheedle himself into the belief of it; for his very inclination to believe it will deter him from entering into a strict examination of those reasons; and being afraid to examine them too far, lest he should find them false and unconcluding, if he can but discern the least colour of probability in their first view and appearance, that will be sufficient to convince him, and render him a warm and zealous convert: for indeed the man was a convert in his heart upon reasons of worldly interest, before ever he thought of those reasons of religion that made him a convert in his judgment; so that it was his interest that converted his affections, and his affections that converted his faith; and yet all this while, for want of self-reflection, the man imagines that his new faith is wholly owing to the reason and evidence it carries with it; whereas, would he but impartially consult himself, and take a little pains to review the steps and progress of his change, where it began, and how it proceeded and concluded, he would soon be forced to acknowledge,

that the first and fundamental reason of it was nothing but a worldly interest. Wherefore, to secure you against this dangerous piece of self-delusion, by which I doubt there are too many men do eternally ruin and destroy themselves, I will endeavour to give you some certain signs and indications by which you may be able to judge, if ever you should be tempted to change your present religion or persuasion, whether you do it sincerely and upon pure conviction of mind, or in mere compliance with any vicious or worldly affection: and I shall give them to you in these following queries, which I earnestly beseech you seriously to propose to your own souls, whenever any such temptation shall befall you.

1. Whether, upon your first entrance on the debate of changing, your prejudice lie on the side of your present religion, or of that you are invited to turn to?

2. Whether you had not some distaste in your affections to your present religion, before you entertained any overtures of changing it?

3. Whether that which gave you first inclination to change was not some temporal interest?

4. Whether, before you entertained any intention to change, you were fully resolved to consult impartially both sides of the question?

5. Whether, when you first entered upon this consultation, it was your unfeigned intention, whatever should happen to you, to adhere to that side which should appear most reasonable?

6. And lastly, Whether, before you were inclined to change, you did conscientiously comply with the obligations of religion, and continued to do so afterwards?

1. When you fall under any temptation to change, ask your own soul, whether your prejudice lie on the side of your present religion, or of that which you are tempted to turn to? There is no man that sincerely professes any religion, but must be strongly prejudiced for it, especially if he imbibed it betimes, and was principled in it by his education; for how can he sincerely profess it without engaging his affections towards it, and heartily espousing its interest? For though I confess it is a fault for men so to preengage themselves to any religious principles, especially such as are not exceeding clear and evident, (and such are all the fundamentals of Christianity,) as to shut their ears against all contrary reasons, and obstinately resolve never to part with them, or so much as to admit into consideration any argument or evidence against them; yet, after all, it is impossible for any sincere professor of any religion, whether it be true or false, to be so indifferently affected towards it, as not to side with it in his will as well as in his faith and judgment; so that whenever he is tempted to desert it, the temptation must necessarily find him strongly preengaged for it; and unless it bring along with it sufficient evidence, not only to convince his reason, but also to captivate his prejudice, it will never be able to prevail. For if ever the man loved his religion, his passion will contend for it as well as his reason; so that all arguments against it, be they never so strong and cogent, will at first especially find a difficult access to, and an ungrateful reception in his mind; and though he is so overborne by the strength of the evidence against it, that he can no longer forbear doubting and suspecting it, yet still he is very loath to part

with it, and still he wishes it were true, though he is not able to evince it so, till after having endured a long siege of strong and pressing arguments he is driven at length out of all his defences, and then his prejudice yields, as well as his judgment, to surrender up his erroneous faith to the prevailing power of his convictions: this is the natural temper of every sincere professor of any religion. When therefore you are at any time tempted to change your religion, before you proceed, pause a while, and consider seriously how you stand disposed, and which way your heart is preengaged; whether to the religion you have hitherto professed, or to that for which you are invited to change it. Consult a while with your own souls to which side of the question you are most inclined to listen, whether to the side which asserts your present persuasion, or to that which contradicts and opposes it. Observe but which way your wishes and your passions move, whether for or against it, and which reasons and arguments you are most concerned for, those that oppose, or those that defend it. For assure yourselves, if the temptation to change find you lukewarm and indifferent, or so much as easy and pliable to its proposals; if it finds you unaverse to admit of a contrary persuasion, or forward to catch at every show of evidence against that religion which you have hitherto professed, or ready to be staggered out of it upon the first appearance of any reasons or probabilities against it; if, I say, you find any of these evil symptoms upon you, when you are first tempted to change, you have great reason to suspect that you are a false hypocrite to that profession which you have hitherto made; that there is some vile affection in you that hath got

the ascendant of your religion and your conscience, and that if in this temper you proceed to a change, you will be found to be a convert of your lusts, and not of your convictions.

2. When you fall under any temptation to change your religion, examine whether you have not entertained some distaste to it in your affections, before you proceed any further; whether you have not entertained some quarrel against it, upon the account of the disturbance it gives you in your vicious delights and enjoyments; or because it too severely exacts of you universal sanctity of life and manners, to which, of all things in the world, your heart is most averse, and without which the inflexible principles of your present persuasion will not permit you to hope for any favour from God, either here or hereafter. Consider whether upon these accounts your mind be not cankered with a secret enmity against your religion; whether under those qualms of conscience it often gives you, your heart doth not rise against it, and you do not sometimes secretly wish that you could release your faith from its tyrannic principles, which give you so much pain and disturbance, and submit it to some gentler religion, that would permit you to sin in quiet, or at least prove more indulgent to your lusts: for if this be your temper, you are in very great danger of being betrayed by it into any false and corrupt religion that shall be tendered you in exchange for your own. For if this other religion offer but any fair terms to your vicious affections, or propose but any expedient how to accommodate the vexatious quarrel between them and your consciences; if it doth but any way reconcile your hope of heaven to your vicious man-

ners, by directing you to some easier terms of salvation than that of forsaking *all unrighteousness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world;* if it will but admit of any commutation of that unsufferable penance of godliness for bodily exercise, of inward mortification for a long fast or a sound whipping, of putting off the old man for putting on a hair shirt, of running the race of a holy life for a sauntering pilgrimage, or the like; this is a religion for your tooth, with which your naughty heart will be ready enough to fall in love upon the first interview; and when once it hath gained our heart and affections, if we do not take the greater heed, they will quickly gain our faith and judgment: for when a man is angry with his own religion because it sits uneasy on his conscience, if a more easy religion presents itself to him, he can hardly forbear wishing it were true, though as yet he hath no evidence that it is so; and then a very slender evidence will suffice to induce a belief of the reality of any thing which a man earnestly wishes and desires. If in this ill temper of mind therefore you should be tempted to change your religion, it concerns you, as much as your souls are worth, to look about you; for you have a seducer in your breast, a prevalent insinuating seducer, viz. some vile and sinful affection, who, if you listen to his charming persuasions, will certainly betray you into a most damnable apostasy. Wherefore, before you proceed to examine the merits of the cause, consider seriously with yourselves, that that disturbance which your present religion gives to your vicious affections, for which you are so angry with it, is so far from being a just ground to suspect it, that

it is a real evidence of the truth of it; because it is a sensible demonstration of its holiness, which is an inseparable concomitant of truth; and therefore for you to desert it upon this motive, is in effect to pronounce it a false religion, because it gives you a sensible experiment of its truth and reality.

3. When you fall under any temptation to change your religion, consider whether that which gave you the first inclination to change was not some temporal interest; whether, before ever you admitted any thought of a change, you did not perceive another religion appear upon the stage attended with all the fair hopes and advantages of this world, and whether this prospect did not first suggest to you a great inclination to enter into its retinue. I do not deny but that even worldly considerations may so far influence honest minds, as to put them upon a more severe and impartial scrutiny of their present persuasions in religion; and unless it be in case of palpable truth or falsehood, it is but honest prudence, when a man's temporal interest lies at stake, to take care that he is sure of his hand, that he doth not throw it away upon a false persuasion in a fit of blind humour or obstinacy, and sacrifice that to an erroneous judgment, which he owes to no other altar but truth's. And indeed before I throw myself upon any suffering, whether it be loss or pain, I am bound in conscience diligently to inquire whether it be for truth or righteousness' sake, lest, instead of receiving the crown of martyrdom, I am sent away to seek my reward in the paradise of fools. But if, merely upon the consideration of any present loss or advantage I find myself strongly inclined to change my religion, before ever I enter into the merits of the

cause, to examine the reasons pro and con, it is a certain sign that that loss or advantage that inclines me, hath a more powerful influence upon me than my religion; that I love the world better than God, and do prefer my earthly expectations before all my hopes of everlasting happiness. And if in this ill temper of mind I should be tempted to a present change, it concerns me, as much as my soul is worth, to be very careful what I do: for I stand upon the brink of a precipice, the foul and fatal precipice of apostasy, into which if I fall, I am ruined for ever. For if in changing my religion it be found that I followed this my wicked inclination more than any sincere conviction, I must expect to be treated by God as an apostate and renegado, as a wilful deserter of his cause, and betrayer of his sacred truth. But if I change, while I stand thus inclined, it is fearfully hazardous but this will be found to be the truth of the case; for in all probability my wicked inclination will cast a mist before my understanding, and so darken its prospect, that it will hardly be able to distinguish the grossest sophistry from the clearest reason. So that now those arguings, which before I saw through with half an eye, and looked upon as most absurd and ridiculous, will appear to my abused and biassed mind in the colours of clear evidence and plain demonstration, and I shall be ready to surrender up my faith to those trifling pretences of reason and authority, which before I laughed at and despised: now, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church*, will seem a very pregnant proof that all the bishops of Rome from St. Peter are ordained the supreme heads of the church, and the fountains of all ecclesiastical authority,

though they are not so much as mentioned in it, no, nor from any thing that appears, so much as thought of. Now, *This is my body*, looks like a substantial evidence of the truth of transubstantiation, and of all those wild absurdities it contains; though those forms of speech, *I am the true vine*, and *I am the door*, do as substantially prove that Christ bears grapes, and turns upon hinges. Now every thing will appear to me in a quite different guise from what it did before, and I shall fancy that I spy demonstration where before I could only discern probability; for a good sum of money or a rich preferment is a strange clearer of some men's eyesight. Thus when a man begins to think of changing his religion under the powerful influence of his worldly interest, that is usually the only effectual reason that leads and persuades him: as for other reasons, they only serve for form sake to disguise the foul apostasy into some resemblance of a sincere conversion; for till his interest struck in with them, they signified nothing with him, made not the least impression on his mind; but being backed with that, all on a sudden they are wondrous cogent and persuasive; from whence it is evident, that they received their strength and force from his interest, without the air of which they are not able to operate; and consequently that the change of his faith is owing to the overruling interest of his covetousness and ambition, and not at all to the prevalence of reason and sincere conviction. For it was that interest that strongly inclined him to change before ever he knew any reason for it, and then it was that inclination that made his reasons and created his convictions; and, let him talk what he pleases of rea-

son, scripture, and authority, if he was strongly inclined to change before he was moved to it by reason and evidence, it is plain that the prevailing motive of his conversion was either the fear of losing some good warm place, or the hope of gaining some important station or preferment. And if this be found the truth of his case when he comes to appear before the tribunal of God, it had been a thousand times better for him that he had never been born; for then he will be found a base deserter of his God, a treacherous Judas to his Saviour, and a perfidious renegado from his religion, and, according to the quality of his sin and guilt, receive his portion of damnation.

4. Consider whether, before you entertained any intention to change, you were fully resolved impartially to consult both sides of the question. I doubt there are too many among us that first resolve to change their religion, and then begin to inquire after reasons and arguments against it, and that their resolution to change is so far from being the effect of sincere conviction, that their conviction is the effect of their resolution. First, some vile affection or some temporal interest recommends another religion to them, that either gives them leave to be wicked without remorse or disturbance, or promises them gain and advancement; upon which they resolve, right or wrong, to entertain and embrace it; and then, to excuse themselves to their own consciences, or to vindicate their reputation to the world from the scandal of being downright apostates, they fall a hunting after reasons and arguments to convince themselves of the truth of it, or at least to make the world believe that it was not their interest but their

conviction that turned them. And when men thus resolve first, and inquire afterwards, to be sure their inquiry will be very partial; for being fully resolved to change their religion upon some vicious or secular motive, it is become their interest to pick holes in it, and to reason or cavil themselves out of the belief of it. And this makes them shy of bringing the matter under a fair and impartial examination, lest, while they are seeking reasons to overthrow their faith, they should find reasons to establish and confirm it. So that they begin their inquiry with these secret intentions; "We will listen only to one side "of the cause, and leave the other to shift for itself; "and seek for as many arguments as we can against "our religion, but none for it. We will read the "books and consult the teachers of one side only, "viz. the opposite side to our present belief and per-"suasion, and if among them we can but find argu-"ments enough to render the contrary persuasion "any way probable, we will submit our faith to it "without any further inquiry, and not trouble our-"selves to examine the evidence on the other side, "for fear we should be convinced, in spite of our "teeth, that the truth lies there; and then our con-"science will never let us be quiet, but be perpe-"tually clamouring against us for base and impious "apostates." That this is the foul and hypocritical intention of too many among us, is notorious enough by their practice; they leap from church to church, and from one communion to another, without any pause or consideration; they are with us to-day, and gone from us to-morrow, and are such mushroom, extemporary converts, that before ever we hear they doubted of their own, they are confirmed in a con-

trary religion. In short, they steal out of their religion so softly, and with so little noise, that they are commonly gone before ever we hear they are going, as if they were afraid we should stop and detain them by better reasons and fuller convictions. Whereas, had these men any conscience or honesty in them, they would consider, that religion is a thing too sacred and serious to be thus dallied and trifled with, and that to change one's religion is a matter of such vast importance as requires a long and through consideration, and a very clear and full conviction of mind; that there is too much depends upon it to part with it upon slight pretences, and that it concerns them as much as an eternity of bliss amounts to, not to desert it upon any other inducement but that of a through well-weighed persuasion of conscience. And if they had had any such honest thoughts about them, while they were under the temptation to change, they would never have admitted any doubt of their religion, but upon great and palpable evidence; and then they would have doubted long before they would have concluded against it, and not have precipitated their judgment hand over head into a contrary persuasion, till they had first applied themselves for resolution again and again to their old guides and pastors, and, with all due deference to their authority, had strictly examined all their reasons and answers, till they had throughly inspected their arguments pro and con, and equally heard both sides of the cause; till they had read, advised, and consulted on both sides, and weighed the whole matter over and over with the greatest care and exactness. But when men run away from their religion in an instant, without ever

observing this regular process of sincere inquiries, it is a plain case that their wills were resolved before their understandings, and that they were converted before ever they were convinced; and consequently, that it was not reason and conviction that turned them, but lust or interest: for though, when they are turned, they may perhaps be very diligent to seek conviction, yet this is only an after-game which they are fain to play, to save their conscience or their reputation.

5. Consider, before you entertain any intention to change, whether it be your unfeigned intention, whatever shall happen to you, to adhere to that side which shall appear most reasonable. Perhaps you are not yet arrived to that height of impiety as to resolve, right or wrong, to change your religion, whether you find it true or false upon a just and fair examination; for this is such an horrible defiance of God, such an express and absolute renunciation of all that is sacred and good, as no man can be guilty of, who is not utterly abandoned of all his natural sense of religion, and relish of good and evil. But yet perhaps you may be tempted to change, with the prospect of such advantages on the one side and calamities on the other, which, though it doth not obtain of you that base and wicked resolution, yet doth so far prevail as to engage you upon a fresh inquiry, to try whether, upon second thoughts and better consideration, you can satisfy your own minds of the truth of that religion you are invited to turn to, that so you may, if possible, comply with a good conscience, and secure your interest in doing your duty. And thus far you are safe enough; but before you proceed any further, it concerns you, as you tender

your everlasting interest, to look into your own souls, and consider seriously whether you are unfeignedly resolved, whatsoever the consequence of things may be, to cleave fast to the truth of God, on which side soever you shall find it. Put the question to yourselves over and over, "O my soul, here are such advantages and such calamities before you, importuning you to change your present discountenanced religion for a more thriving and prosperous one; are you now resolved fairly and impartially to examine the merit of the cause?" And if thereupon you still find reason to believe that your present religion is the very truth of Jesus, will you rather renounce those advantages, and incur those calamities, than forego it? Will you follow the truth wheresoever you find it, and whithersoever it shall happen to lead you, though it be from preferment to persecution? Are you resolved, by the grace of God, to prostrate all your temporal hopes and fears before it, and rather to lose any good, or suffer any evil, than desert it? For let me tell you, if you find your heart shrink at this proposal, or that you have any reserved intention, if the worst come to the worst, rather to part with your religion, right or wrong, than to shake hands with your temporal interest, you are in a very unfitting temper to examine on which side the truth lies. For it is a plain case, your mind is under a prevailing bias of temporal hopes and fears, which will be sure to incline it to favour that side of the question which is most for your interest; and it will be impossible for you to examine fairly and judge impartially, whilst your judgment is thus bribed and corrupted by your interest. For your will hath already determined upon the matter before ever

your understanding hath heard the cause, and it is your secret intention, right or wrong, to forego your religion rather than your interest, if ever they come in competition. So that now you will be obliged, in your own defence, to use your utmost art to set the fairest colours upon the evidences against your religion, and to stifle and enervate those that assert and maintain it, lest they should so confirm you in the belief of it, as that, when occasion requires, you will not be able to surrender it up, without committing an horrible outrage and violence upon yourselves. Wherefore, before you suffer your worldly hopes and fears to summon your religion upon a new trial, be sure you fix this resolution in your souls; "By the grace of God, I will now lay aside all interest and affection, and strictly examine the evidence on both sides with an equal and unbiassed judgment. I will attend to nothing but the reasons of things, and the pure merits of the cause; and wherever I find the truth lies, whether on the side of my interest or against it, I will be sure to follow it, whatsoever shall be the event and issue." For if, upon the temptation of any worldly interest, you bring your religion to a new trial, with this secret intention, that though it should still approve itself to your judgment, yet you will rather part with it than abandon that interest, this very intention will be apt to blind and mislead your judgment, to arm your wit and reason against your religion, and to set all your faculties at work to argue you out of it, and pervert you from it to a contrary faith and persuasion; which if it should accomplish, you will certainly be found guilty of a wilful apostasy when you come to be tried before the tribunal of God, to whose

all-seeing eye the most secret motions of your souls are as visible, as if they were written on your foreheads with a sunbeam; who sees your treacherous heart and false intention rather to forsake his truth than your interest, and knows very well that it is this that seduces you, and gives force to those false reasons and convictions that impose upon your judgment, and betray your faith.

6. And lastly, When you fall under any temptation to change your religion, consider whether before you were inclined to change you did conscientiously comply with the obligations of it. We have too many men that pretend to be mighty inquisitive after the true church and the true religion, and yet live as if there were no such thing as true religion in the world, and quietly allow themselves in such impious courses, as do openly affront the common principles of all religions. There is nothing they dread so much as heresy, and, if you will believe them, are monstrously concerned to examine whether the church, with which they now communicate, be catholic or heretical; and yet all this while they persist, without any concern or remorse, in the most damnable heresy in the world, and that is, a wicked and immoral life. So that upon comparing their atheistical lives with the loud cry they make about the true catholic faith and church, one would be tempted to think that their Christianity began at the wrong end of their creed, and that they believed in the *holy catholic church*, before they believe *in God the Father Almighty*, or *in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord*; which is such a gross and fulsome piece of hypocrisy, as one would think any modest man should be ashamed of. For in the name of God, sirs, what have you to do

to wrangle and make a noise about religion, whose profligate manners are a shame and scandal to common humanity? It is a reproach to any religion for you to name it, and shame to any church for you to pretend to it; and therefore, when such as you raise a cry after the true church and true religion, it is a plain case that, whatever pretence you bring upon the stage, you are prompted by some base interest behind the curtain. And is it not a pleasant thing to hear such profligates as these pretend to be converts, who only turn from one opinion to another, but still continue as wicked and unreformed in their manners, under the opinion they turn to, as they were under that they turned from? These are such converts, as there is no church in the world that advances true piety above worldly interest, but would glory to lose, and blush to gain: and what Diogenes said of a wicked fellow that praised him, that the religion may say which those men turn to, "What "hurt have I done, what wicked principles am I "guilty of, that such vile wretches as these should "commend and embrace me?" For, for God's sake, what is it that they are converted to? Is it to any thing that renders them wiser or better men? No, the contrary is too notorious through the whole course of their actions. Well then, it seems they are converted to something that doth them no manner of good, that serves them to no true end of religion; that is, to a mere empty notion, that only gingles about their understandings, but hath no good influence on their hearts and manners. Had their conversion proceeded upon pure principles of conscience, that would have obliged them to change their manners, as well as their opinions; there being very few

opinions in religion so contradictory to the natural sentiments of conscience, as a vicious and immoral life. Supposing that the papal supremacy, purgatory, and transubstantiation were true, yet that the contrary doctrines to these are errors, can never be so evident to any man's conscience, as that drunkenness, adultery, fraud, and oppression, are sins; and therefore for any man to pretend that he forsook those errors out of conscience, who yet makes no conscience of continuing in these sins, is such a transparent hypocrisy, as hath not visor and disguise enough to abuse either the most candid or credulous. If therefore, before you are resolved to forsake your sins, you are tempted to forsake your religion, it is a plain case that it is not your conscience or conviction that tempts you, but your lust or interest. Had it been conscience, it would have been far more importunate with you to reform your manners than your faith, and to become good men, than catholic believers; and therefore, under your present circumstances, you ought to be very careful what you do, and how you comply with the temptation, lest, to all the rest of your sins, you add that foul and fatal one of apostasy, and thereby fill up the measure of your iniquities, and finally provoke Almighty God to abandon you, as you have abandoned him, and give you up for lost and desperate.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

THE FUNERAL OF

THE REV. JOHN SCOTT, D. D.

UPON

PHILIPPIANS III. 20, 21.

Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

I. WHEN a pestilential distemper was raging in Africk, the holy father St. Cyprian takes occasion from thence to encourage the Christians against the fear of death; and to set before them such consolations as were proper for this calamity: he assures them, that[a] "the day of their decease would restore "them to paradise, and to the kingdom of heaven;" and the concluding argument that he useth, is to remind them of the excellent company they should meet with in the other world, immediately upon their departure from hence; "There is waiting for "us above," saith he, "a great number of our dearest

[a] Amplectamur diem, qui assignat singulos domicilio suo; qui nos istinc ereptos, et laqueis secularibus exsolutos paradiso restituit et regno cœlesti. *De Mortal.*

"friends; our parents, and brethren, and children, "are all desiring our access to them; and being now "secured of their own immortality, they are still so-"licitous for our salvation; and what a common re-"joicing will it be both to them and us, to have the "sight and embraces of one another!" And then he goes on to speak of the apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, and virgins, that we shall find in the heavenly mansions; as if nothing could be more desirable than to hasten thither with all possible speed: *Quis non ad suos navigare festinans, ventum prosperum cupidius optaret, ut velociter caros liceret amplecti?* Thus we see this glorious martyr discoursing with such earnestness of the next life, as if he were then hoisting up his sails, and launching forth into the ocean of eternity: and he is the more to be hearkened to, because he had received, as he tells us, immediate[b] revelation from God, concerning the happiness of departed souls: and from what he hath said, in conjunction with others, we may gather it to have been the more approved opinion of the primitive church, that the spirits of righteous men go directly to heaven; and the fathers, who speak otherwise, and favour an intermediate estate, seem to have done it upon their own peculiar notions, as they might inoffensively do, in a matter not clearly decided by the light of scripture. The comfort which that admirable father gives to the Christians of his age is very seasonable for us at this time, when God, in his unsearchable judgment, hath removed

[b] Nobis ipsis minimis quoties revelatum est, ut publice prædicarem fratres nostros non esse lugendos accersitione Dominica de seculo liberatos; nec accipiendas esse hic atras vestes, quando illi ibi indumenta alba jam sumpserint? *De Mortal.*

from us so many eminent persons, and particularly within the space of a week,[c] three of the greatest ornaments of our church, as it were in attendance upon the untimely obsequies of that blessed queen, (that bright luminary of religion and virtue,) whose delight it was to protect and adorn it. However, we must with humble submission adore the justice of God; and we hope that he intends not war against us by calling his servants home; that he will now accept of a sacrifice; and that some of these holy prophets will prevail with him to stop the hand of his destroying angel. *Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger towards us to cease. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?* Psalm lxxxv. 4, 5, 6. Doubtless he will revive us, and speak peace unto us, if we attend to what he hath spoken to us, and *turn not again to folly;* and what he speaks to us upon this mournful occasion, what thoughts and resolutions he expects from us, and what our eloquent brother would speak to us, if he were not now silent, we may hear from the apostle; *Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

II. In which words I shall desire you to consider these two points: first, a duty represented, and that is, to have *our conversation in heaven;* and secondly,

[c] Mr. Wharton, March 5. Dr. Scott, March 10. Dr. Dove, March 11.

an incitement to it from the consideration of our future bliss. I begin with the duty which is intimated in my text, namely, the having of *our conversation in heaven;* for the explication whereof I shall briefly insist upon these two heads: first, what is imported hereby; and secondly, how reasonable it is to act accordingly. First, let us observe what is imported by having *our conversation in heaven:* the word is πολίτευμα, and seems here to signify the rights and immunities of a citizen; and to intimate that we are by profession citizens of that glorious corporation which is above, and ought to demean ourselves as such, that we may not lose the freedom and privileges belonging to it: this is a *continuing city, and a city which hath foundations,* Heb. xiii. 14. and xi. 10. Clem. Alex. l. iv. as the apostle calls it: and a very learned father tells us, that the Stoics would allow heaven only to be properly a city, no community upon earth deserving that name[d]. It is a fair conjecture, that our apostle doth here more particularly allude to the dignity of the freemen of Rome, which in his days was mightily esteemed, and enjoyed by many that were not born there, and lived in countries very remote: and this resembleth the condition of Christians, who are naturalized and incorporated into another city, even while they remain at such a distance from the place of their liberty, and are labouring under the servitude of this present life.

III. To explain the compass of the duty before us, we may take notice, that it includes the three following steps; first, a due esteem of the happiness of the next life; secondly, the kindling of our desires

[d] Πᾶσα ψυχὴ σοφοῦ πατρίδα μὲν οὐρανὸν, γῆν δὲ ξένην ἔλαχε. Phil. Jud. p. 196.

and affections towards the attainment of it; and thirdly, a conversation answerable thereunto. First, we are to esteem the felicity of the next life suitably to what we know of it; we are not to diminish our concern for it, because it flatters not our sensuality, is a pure and invisible possession; and we are to follow our Saviour's judgment, comparing it to *treasure hid in a field*, for which a wise purchaser will *sell all that he hath:* and to *a pearl of great price*, which a merchant finding exposed to sale, *he went and sold all that he had, and bought it:* and assuring us, that if a man could *gain the whole world by losing his own soul*, Matt. xiii. 44, 45. and xvi. 26. he would make a very foolish bargain. It is possible, I confess, for men that are wholly taken up with the distractions and enjoyments of this present world, to have a speculative regard for those felicities which are promised to us hereafter; and in their lucid intervals, to think them more valuable than those weak and empty satisfactions which they are so eager in pursuing. But still, whatever the judgment may be of cool reason, the opinions of men are to be weighed by their actions; and if sensual objects carry the soul after them, and are laboured after with the warmest prosecutions, it is plain enough they are nearest to the heart, and preferred before the spiritual joys of the life to come.

IV. Secondly, The having *our conversation in heaven*, implies the seeking for it earnestly, and the inflaming of our desires and affections towards it: for what we love and set a value upon, we are naturally willing to enjoy; and it is impossible that any man should have a true notion of heaven, and not wish to be possessed of it hereafter: only here

lies the misery of deluded sinners, that they would have it consistent with their lusts and pleasures, and attainable upon such terms as God cannot allow. But when Christ hath commanded us to *seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, with preference to all other things, *and to lay up our treasure in heaven*, Matt. vi. 33, 20, 21: that our heart may likewise be there; we are not to think of heaven as we would of a beautiful and magnificent city, where we have no business, and to which we never intend to go; but we are to look upon it as the place to which we are travelling, and where God hath provided for us the best patrimony, and hereupon to anticipate the possession of it by our fervent wishes, and to be affected as the Psalmist was; *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* Psalm xlii. 2. He that hath a rich vessel coming home from the Indies, will be frequently grasping it in his mind, and hearkening continually after the tidings of it, and full of solicitude, till it safely arrives in the harbour: and so the devout soul, that hath a lively sense of the glories of another life, is ever looking towards them, and longing for an admission to them, and lifting up her head with joyful expectation, *because her redemption draweth nigh*. Supposing we sincerely believe *the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting*, it follows in a natural course, that we should be very desirous of attaining to this immortality, and have strong inclinations to dwell in the habitations of eternity; or else the will doth not go after the judgment with such ardency and sedulity, as it doth in secular pursuits; and it is a vain profession that we make, *I look for the*

resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

V. Thirdly, The having *our conversation in heaven* imports the living answerably to our hopes of futurity; for otherwise they will be miserably disappointed; and *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And this is not only the condition immutably fixed, but is also necessary to dispose us for the relish of those pure and spiritual pleasures, which can be no paradise to an unclean soul: and if we could imagine the rich glutton, with all his vicious appetites, translated into the portion of Lazarus, even the bosom of the patriarch would have been to him a place of torment. God hath been unspeakably merciful in preparing an eternal reward for us, upon such easy and just conditions as he hath enabled us to perform; and in sending his Son to be our guide and our sacrifice: but it is absurd to presume that we are bound to do nothing for this mighty recompense; that we shall be wafted to bliss, while we lie sleeping in the bark; that we may go with unclean hands and polluted hearts into the dwellings of purity; and that the blood of the everlasting Mediator was shed for lazy and impenitent sinners, that trample upon his cross. There is no man so very brutal, but that he wisheth with himself he might be happy after death; and if he hath not quite extinguished the sparks of natural religion, and hath any glimpse of the immortality to come, he desires to be made partaker of it: but how many are in hell, that during their abode here were hoping foolishly they might get to heaven at last! And what can it avail, to wish faintly and slothfully for blessedness, without striving to obtain

it in the way which God hath appointed? It was the *good and faithful servant* that improved the talents committed to him, and not the unprofitable loiterer, who *entered into the joy of his lord*, Matt. xxv. 21. There is no mocking of God; and without serving him sincerely, there can neither be any comfort after death, nor dying with peace and satisfaction. Who can express the darkness and horrors of a deathbed, when men have lived dissolutely and profanely, and their old vices are got together to haunt them like spectres, and conscience is awakened to accuse and condemn them, and, the world deserting them, nothing remains but the guilt of their sins to pursue them immediately to the bar of justice? But no consolations are equal to those resulting from a life religiously spent; and the true Christian, under the bitterest agonies of death, hath a God to converse with, and a Saviour before his eyes, and an eternity of joy ready to receive him; and he can say with assurance, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

VI. I come now, in the second place, to evince the reasonableness of having *our conversation in heaven:* and that I may not trespass in staying upon such an undeniable truth, I shall only mention these three considerations. First, that our Christian profession engageth us to this holy temper, and by our baptism we are born as it were into another world, and made the citizens of heaven, and consequently are obliged to the behaviour of such: and he that honestly follows a crucified Master, and renounceth

the allurements of this world, must be supposed to have a prospect of the other, *where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*, Col. iii. 1. Secondly, Heaven is the place for which we are created; and God in forming man after his own image, designed him for the everlasting fruition of himself: innocent men would have been translated to a much higher paradise; and we that are fallen know it to be the end of our redemption, that we should *come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*, Heb. xii. 22. and that we should *inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34. Thirdly, Heaven is the place of the greatest happiness attainable by us, and not only inexpressibly beyond all these lower satisfactions, but also above our comprehension: for till we know the most extended capacity of the soul, and what degrees of blessedness, what proficiency, what illuminations it is capable of; and till we know moreover how far God will discover himself in filling all the dimensions of it, and in raising it to the highest pitch of created perfection; we cannot have a just and proportionable idea of that ineffable happiness which is purchased for us by the blood of Christ. So much however God hath revealed to us concerning our future reward, as is sufficient to quicken our most active endeavours for it: *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when God shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. And certainly the vision of God's essential glories, which are unapproachable to us here, and the resemblance to his transcendent nature; the beholding of him face to face, the dwelling within the circle of his

throne, and the seeing of the mysteries of faith unveiled; together with the consequential ardency of affection towards God, and the loving, and admiring, and adoring of him proportionably to the light of the understanding; all this is infinitely more worthy of our ambition than all the fading enjoyments of the world, and may engage us to be diligent in our Christian race, and in working for eternity.

VII. This will be further evident from the second point which I offered; namely, The incitement given by our apostle, from the consideration of our future bliss: *Our conversation is to be in heaven*, because *we look for our Saviour's coming* from thence in glory, to raise us up to an immortal life, and to change our vile, and infirm, and mouldering bodies into such as will be of a noble and lasting frame, and fashioned after the pattern of his own resurrection. In this argument of our apostle we may take notice of two assertions; the first of them is, That this vile body, which we carry about here, is to rise again, and to be rebuilt after the likeness of the glorious body of Christ: and if it were otherwise, it is not easily conceivable how the doctrine of the resurrection can be properly maintained. For that only can justly be said to rise again which is fallen, and buried in the earth: but the soul is uncapable of dying; and therefore, unless the same body be revived, unless there be a resuscitation of that which was asleep in the grave, we are in danger of losing the resurrection. Did not Christ arise with the same flesh that was crucified, and retaining the very print of the nails? And are we not to be raised after the same model? And he hath told us, that *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come*

forth unto the resurrection either of life or of damnation, John v. 28, 29. And his apostle hath taught us, that *this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*, 1 Cor. xv. 53. It shall put on a new garment, and by consequence shall remain entire; and from hence the identity of the corrupted and the rising body seems to be clearly revealed. If it be so, it is in vain to contradict it by philosophical cavils; for to support our belief, the apostle reminds us of God's omnipotent strength, *whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself*. The power of God is but a weak argument for the truth of an article of faith, unless the revelations of his will be clear and convincing; for otherwise, by this plea the most absurd monstrosities in religion may be defended: but where the divine will is perspicuously declared, (as in the case of the resurrection,) the omnipotence of God comes in for a seasonable and sufficient reply to all the astonishing difficulties that our reason can muster up. It is, I confess, not easy to conceive, how the members that have been consumed in the grave, and scattered into a thousand places, and travelled through all the elements, should, after many ages, reassemble their broken pieces, and shake off their rottenness, and reassume their ancient figure, and rise up into a beautiful frame. But who can prescribe limits to an almighty Being? *The thunder of his power who can understand?* Job xxvi. 14. And since he hath promised to raise up mankind, who can say to him that it cannot possibly be? We know the infinite power of God in building this vast universe, when he had no matter to work upon; and in fashioning man, the image of himself, out of the

dust of the ground; and we cannot but admire the daily miracles of his providence, in continuing the successive generations of men, and forming them all in the womb: and then we may conclude, that he who hath done all this, is likewise able to recollect and reanimate our putrefied bodies, and to overpower all the obstacles that stand in his way: and *why should it be thought a thing incredible with us, that God should raise the dead?* Acts xxvi. 8.

VIII. The second assertion in our apostle is this; That there is to be a change in our bodies at the resurrection, and a likeness to the glorified body of Christ: they are to be substantially the same, but clothed with a robe of unknown glory, and with new endowments and qualities, suitably to that heavenly life which they must enter into. The question was made in the days of our apostle, *How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?* 1 Cor. xv. 35. and 42, 43, 44. And he not only clears the certainty of our resurrection, but also the conformity of it to that of Christ. And it was an old [q]tradition in the church, That every Christian shall be raised up in the same ripeness of age, as our Saviour was of at the time of his passion. *The body is sown in corruption, and raised in incorruption;* that is, in this life it hath the seeds of dissolution, and, upon the withdrawing of the soul, must of necessity fall into dust and rottenness; but hereafter it will be subject to no decay, no frailty, and no misery, being framed of such a durable substance, as to prove an immortal habitation to the returning soul: it will not be pinched with necessities, and

[q] Hieron. Ep. 27.

pains, and diseases, nor troubled with daily repairs, and with providing against the ruins of mortality; for *they that shall be counted worthy to obtain the resurrection of the dead, cannot die any more: as being equal to the angels; and the children of God*, Luke xx. 35, 36. Again, *The body is sown in dishonour, and raised in glory;* that is, a brightness, and lustre, and majesty will overspread those bodies, which are here of a despicable and mean aspect; especially when they are committed to the ground, with the pale and frightful visage of death, which turns the fairest countenance into a spectacle of blackness and horror: but in the resurrection, a fresh and unperishing beauty shall dwell upon the exalted body; and *then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*, Matt. xiii. 43. they shall be surrounded with beams of perpetual light resting upon them: and such a refulgency there was in the face of Moses, when he came down from conversing with God in the mount; and in the transfiguration of Christ, when *his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*, Matt. xvii. 2. Again, *The body is sown in weakness, and raised in power;* that is, those indispositions and infirmities which beset the flesh in our present estate, and make it a dull, and sluggish, and cumbersome lump, shall then be removed, and there shall be no clogs and fetters of the soul to obstruct her operations. Here we are too sensible how backward the flesh is to obey the spirit; and even in our approaches to God, we find a heaviness and deadness upon us from the reluctancy of it, and we are soon tired even by the best performances: but the glorified body will be an equal companion

to the soul, and nimbly execute whatever is fitting for it, and fly with the wings of an angel upon any superior call, and join with unwearied delight in the never-ceasing work of the saints, and in the adorations of God. Lastly, *The body which is sown is natural;* that is, invested with such faculties, and appetites, and inclinations, as are peculiarly fitted to this lower world; but *it is raised a spiritual body;* that is, adorned with celestial qualities, and accommodated to that divine employment, which is to entertain us everlastingly in the next life. Here the unruly, headstrong body is very difficult to be managed; but when it shall be spiritualized, and purified, and adapted to the joys of heaven, it will be at perfect amity with the soul, and tuned for ever to the hallelujahs of the spirits above.

IX. This is that blessedness which is to inspire us with vigour in all the exercises of a Christian life, and to prepare us with alacrity for a Christian death: but lest it should be objected, that this is not an adequate encouragement in our fears, and losses, and calamities; for if we must wait for happiness till the second coming of our Lord, and the reassumption of our bodies, what is there to rebate the apprehensions of death? why should we not be unwilling to quit our present satisfactions for those which are not to come till after a long and uncertain period? and what ground is there of thanks to God for the departure of our friends? For the preventing of such objections, I shall subjoin this consideration to what hath been said; that righteous souls depart from hence into a state of felicity. We cannot trace the motions of the naked soul, nor see the angels that conduct it; but an intelligent and

immortal substance, wherever it is, must undoubtedly have a suitable habitation, and live, and think, and contemplate; and probably with more freedom and vivacity than in these cottages of clay. 'But to suppose it in a slumbering and unactive estate, and much more to suspect the vanishing of it, is to degrade ourselves below the conceptions of the heathen world, and to resist the natural impressions of conscience: *Natura ipsa de immortalitate animorum tacita judicat*, saith the Roman orator Cicero. Wherefore we justly believe, that the spirits of righteous men are in some active and joyful repose; sensible of their present bliss, and expecting fuller degrees of it: they know themselves to be delivered from the troubles and sorrows of mortality, from the tossings of the world, and the entanglements of sin; they enjoy God with more familiarity than they could here in the most exalted raptures of devotion; and, looking beyond the circle of time, they behold a brighter eternity moving towards them, and a triumph of glory preparing for them: and then how can we doubt of their having a present reward? how can we attend upon them, and not congratulate their joy? What communication they have with us, God hath been pleased to hide from us, and probably to prevent our addresses to them: but we may presume their love towards us is equally enlarged with the rest of their graces; and possibly they [r] intercede

[r] Αἱ τῶν προκεκοιμημένων ἁγίων ψυχαὶ συνεύχονται. *Orig. de Orat.* §. 34. Αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διακονοῦσι τοῖς εὐχομένοις ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτημάτων. *Id Ex. ad Mart.* p. 192. Δεήσεως συνεργοὶ, πρεσβευταὶ δυνατώτατοι. *Basil. Hom.* 20. Ἀξιόπιστοι τῆς πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην ἱκεσίας παράκλητοι. *Greg. Nyss. Orat. in XL. Mart.* Speramus quod liberis suis apud Christum præsul assistat. *Ambros. de Obit. Theodos.* Pro te Dominum rogat, mihique veniam impetrat peccatorum. *Hieron. Ep.* 25.

for us, though not in a sacerdotal way, (as Christ alone can do,) yet in the way of charity, as members of the same body with us. We acknowledge to God in our public prayers, that "the spirits of just men "made perfect do live with him, after they are de-"livered from their earthly prisons; and the souls "of them that sleep in the Lord Jesus are received "into the heavenly habitations, and enjoy perpetual "felicity." And if *Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom*, Luke xvi. 22. if the penitent thief went from the cross with our Saviour into paradise, Luke xxiii. 43. if St. Stephen had reason to pray, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. if the apostle was willing to *depart*, that he might immediately *be with Christ*, Philipp. i. 23. and if the souls of the martyrs are under the heavenly altar, clothed in *white robes*, Rev. vi. 9, 10, 11. and communicating with God; then we may be confident of the delightful rest of [1]saints departed, and follow them with acclamations to the seat of blessedness.

X. This is the proper consolation for us, upon parting with that excellent man, in whose place I now stand; who was so well known and respected in this audience, that it would be vanity in me to offer at his character, unless I could praise him in his own eloquence: and yet, before we leave him in the house of silence, it may justly be expected that

[1] Confecto itinere virtutis ac fidei, ad complexum et osculum Domini venerunt. *Cyprian. Ep.* 37. edit. Oxon. Οἱ ἐν ἀγάπῃ τελειωθέντες ἔχουσι χώραν εὐσεβῶν. *Clem. Alex.* lib. 4. Τὸν ἀγαπητὸν ἡμῶν οὐρανὸς ὑπεδέξατο. μικρὸν ἀναμείνωμεν, καὶ συνεσόμεθα τῷ ποθουμένῳ. *Basil. Ep.* 188. Fruitur nunc Theodosius luce perpetua, tranquillitate diuturna, et munerationis divinæ fructibus gratulatur. *Ambros. de Obit. Theod.* Testor Jesum, quem Blæsilla nunc sequitur; testor sanctos angelos, quorum consortio fruitur. *Hieron. Ep.* 25.

I should do some right to his memory, and enforce some instructive lessons from his great example. In doing so, I shall not pretend to draw the lines of his history, nor mention any common and undistinguishing attainments, nor use any art in setting him forth; but with a simplicity fit for this place, and suitable to his unaffected life, I shall briefly consider him in these two heads; his private virtues, and his services for the church. He had many virtues of no ordinary growth; and we may call them to mind, by reviewing his much applauded work of the Christian Life: which he intended to continue, and perfect, if Providence had not put a stop to his useful design, first by a long craziness, and then by taking him suddenly from us. Next to his piety towards God, his social virtues (as his own distinction is) were those for which we shall be most sensible of our loss in him; for his kindness, and humanity, and amicable disposition, and affability, and pleasantness of temper, and condescension, and sincerity, and readiness to do all good offices for any that had recourse to him. In helping others, and laying out for their advantage the authority which he had gained, in giving counsel and directions, and in cementing amity and peace, he exhausted very much of his time; and delighted as much in doing any friendly turn, as if the profit had redounded to himself. In works of mercy he took a peculiar pleasure; and did as zealously promote them, as if he had relieved himself by supporting the poor: he was a common father to the persecuted and afflicted; and *the brethren and strangers*, whose bowels he hath refreshed, will *bear witness of his charity before the church*, 3 John 5, 6. Friendship is one of the noblest ornaments of human

nature; and if *God* himself *is love*, 1 John iv. 16. it is the portraiture of God drawn upon the soul: and for this virtue he was exceedingly valued by those that were intimate with him; he was not infected with any of those vices which blast it, with pride, or moroseness, or envy, or selfishness; his inclinations were to refresh and cherish all men, and only to neglect himself; his doors and his heart were open to all; and he hath left behind him the indelible commendation of a true, and steadfast, and faithful friend.

XI. Again; let us look upon him in his public character; and if *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever*, Dan. xii. 3. we may be humbly confident of his having a proportionable reward. His education happened to be in the times of confusion, and yet without any detriment to him; for he imbibed the principles of that renowned university in which he was bred, and not of the men who then governed it; the same good Spirit that called him thither from another employment, directing him what to do; and when the church was covered in ruins, he discerned her beauty; and received holy orders from one of those ejected confessors, who, during the devastation, did secretly preserve the apostolical discipline. His appearance in the world was early; and as God had furnished him with extraordinary talents, and had enabled him to improve them well, and to possess abilities equal to his high profession; the same Divine goodness chose a fitting theatre for them to be manifested upon. His eloquent, and solid, and fervent preaching commanded the applauses of men, and his constancy in it procured their love: and

though his frequency in this work, and his diligence in his pastoral charge, and his industry in resolving cases of conscience, and his restless application to the labours of his calling, wasted him by degrees, yet he could not be satisfied without doing his duty; and that which sent him the sooner to God, will enlarge his recompense from him. He ran his course in times of great trial and discrimination; and in all of them he approved his inflexible and uncorrupted integrity, and adhered steadfastly to the principles of our church: and they will carry a man safely through all difficulties and all revolutions; and though it should be his lot to be reviled and oppressed by men, yet he cannot be dejected in conscience, nor forsaken by God. He owned it for his rule, in all vicissitudes *to keep a clean and quiet conscience;* as knowing that this would be a sanctuary, when all earthly comforts should fail: and he remembered the wise maxim, *He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap*, Eccles. xi. 4. and therefore without minding the weather, or taking directions from the sky, he went on directly in his calling; and made it his business to *sow to the Spirit*, that he might *of the Spirit reap life everlasting*, Gal. vi. 8. When popery invaded our established religion, he was one of those worthy champions that defended it with an upright zeal: they held up their shields together, and united their counsels and endeavours as one man; they saw their diocesan (whom they mightily honoured) singled out for the first sacrifice, because he would not surrender them; they saw the Roman eagle advancing every day, and fresh attempts made to demolish our church; and then it was that, by

preaching, and praying, and writing, they gained an universal esteem, and supported our holy religion. In this cause our friend, whom we are waiting upon, did cordially concur with his brethren, and was prepared to suffer as much as any of them. He understood our constitution entirely, and that made him the more hearty in asserting it upon all occasions; and, I trust, there is no man here but honours his memory the more for being so: for though our enemies have branded us for this constancy, and have been sowing divisions, and putting ignominious marks of distinction between us, we cannot be so blind as not to see the artifice is contrived in order to the more easy subversion of all of us: and if a resolute adherence to well-chosen principles; if to defend that liturgy, which we have solemnly testified our approbation of in the presence of God; if to be firm to our subscriptions, and to our vows of ordination; if to contend for the *faith once delivered unto the saints*, Jude 3. and for that government by which we were consecrated to the service of the church, and which we believe to have been transmitted down to us from the apostles; if this be a reproach, I fear it will soon be counted a reproach to be a Christian. Our deceased brother did therefore upon all emergencies maintain an unspotted fidelity to the church, and acted consonantly to what he had professed concerning it, in these words: "Whatsoever her fate may be, I am chained to her fortunes by my reason and conscience; and shall ever esteem it more eligible to be crushed in pieces by her fall, which God avert, than to flourish and triumph on her ruins[8]." This resolution he kept

[8] Epist. Ded. to the Bishop of London, vol. i. p. v.

to the last, and still with a peaceful and charitable spirit, and without aiming at his own interest through that of the church; for when offers were made to him of higher stations in the church, he declined them, upon the sense of decays creeping upon him; and he rejoiced more in the advancement of other worthy men, than he would have done in his own. His inherent greatness wanted no outward accessions; and the preferment he was ambitious of, was to go from his flock *unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25.

XII. Under his protection and custody let us now leave him; and let us pray to God to raise up new instruments of his glory, and to *send forth* more *labourers into his harvest*, Matt. ix. 38. for those whom he hath called home to receive their wages. In him, whom we now attend, we have lost one, whom many of us respected as an instructer, an oracle, a father to us; but we have still an eternal, an unchangeable God, and he can compensate all our losses; he can create workmen, as well as appoint their work; and he can say to the most unqualified of us, as he did to Joshua, *As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*, Josh. i. 5. For a conclusion, I shall add one word to you, in ministering to whom this servant of God ended his race: he came to you in his declining years, and with the disadvantage of succeeding one of the most eminent persons of our church, and yet you honoured and loved him, and thought you still enjoyed his great predecessor: and therefore if I were to speak in his name, it would be to return thanks for your kindnesses to him; but acting by a higher commission, I shall rather desire

you to express your regard to his memory, by obeying those good instructions which he brought from our common Master, to whom he is gone; and *to remember the word of God, which he hath spoken unto you, and to follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation,* Heb. xiii. 7.

Which happy end God in his infinite goodness grant to us all, through the merits and mediation of Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

A

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3	12	1	75
3	13	3	142
3	14	1	135
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3	19	3	156
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4	13	1	245
ibid.		2	10
4	14, &c.	2	439
4	15	2	255
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ibid.		2	235
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8	3	2	365
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8	12	3	145
9	7	5	290
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9	10	6	196
9	12	2	373
9	13	2	387
9	13, &c.	2	372
ibid.		2	384
9	14	3	616
9	14, &c.	2	242
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9	24	1	190
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10	27	5	84
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